The remapping of cartographies of knowledge, the reorientation of genealogies of comparison, the zoning of what might be thought of as “the great unthought” (associated by N. Katherine Hayles with “the cognitive nonconscious”), all have been fully underway for quite some time in critical and curatorial practice.¹ Literary theory has also been much taken up by the cartographic turn.² But it may be time to focus in an even more pointed way on translational issues as they affect the designation of regional entities and identities and, in turn, define how geotopic regionalisms—global/local, Europe/non-Europe, North/South, South-South, intra-Asian, tricontinental, zones of settlement and

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unsettlement—are negotiated by artists or by curators designing exhibitions with a global remit. I will propose a model of *regioning differences* that focuses on the politics of “area-ization,” with special emphasis on denominations of continental relation, orientation, and entanglement that defy the monothetic rubrics that order planetary maps and secure sovereign borders. These would be terms that are themselves constantly in translation, which is to say, subject to revision and renaming; terms that may once have designated juridically determinate zones and apportioned territories (what Carl Schmitt associated with “the nomos of the earth”): proprietary lands, gridded agricultural landscapes shaped by labor, communities unified by shared custom, language, and the spirit of the laws), but which now refer to localities that belong to no fixed map (such as the zone, the camp, the off-shore haven where international art is banked, or virtual geographies that exist ephemerally as internet domains). Alongside these terms there are others that refer to transregional encounters retrieved from archived corners of history. They afford a glimpse of political relations that have been assigned lesser importance, have receded in dominant national historical narratives, or have yet to fully materialize (as in the potential of pan-Africanist models of post-capitalism, or a transgenerational revival of Third Worldism, or Zavaleta’s “peripheral-motley” model of political conceptual and social hybridity among popular and indigenous sectors across the Global South, or the ecopolitics of the Zomia, mobilizing remote highland areas in Southeast Asia). The program copy and open call for the Forest Curriculum Summer School in Bangkok, Thailand (2018 and 2019), identify “a hybrid form” and propose a multi-scalar study of Zomiaian terrain, itself marked out as a


2 Ibid.
queer site of the Anthropocene that challenges the alleged privileging of the human in theories of planetarity. Negotiating new materialisms and ancient cosmological systems, the curriculum advocates a transdisciplinary approach to science and religion in its ecopolitical practices and pedagogies.\textsuperscript{6} What is of particular interest here is the way in which “Zomia”—a new name that supports a new conceptualization of geological territory—enters the cartographic vocabulary. It embodies a creative exercise in doing things with words as well as rejiggering planetary orientations.

The problem of naming regions in curatorial practice comes into sharp relief in several watershed exhibitions that set themselves the task of creating a global purview. I will consider three of them, if only emblematically: the Global Conceptualism show organized at the Queens Museum of Art in New York in 1999; Documenta 11 _Platforms 1–5_, in 2001–2; and Seismography of Struggle: Towards a Global History of Critical and Cultural Journals, curated by Zahia Rahmani and exhibited at the Dak’art Biennial and in New York at the Gallatin Galleries in 2018. They represent, as we know, a mere fraction of the exhibits that now routinely take place in cities such as Istanbul, Mexico City, Johannesburg, Sharjah, Seoul, Shanghai, Taipei, and Bangkok. Touted as local economy builders (much like the Olympics), but also recognized as important sites of aesthetic opportunity and critical exchange, these shows have become a staple of art world survival and scene-making. Charles Green and Anthony Gardner cover the history of this “festivalism” in their book _Biennials, Triennials, and documenta: The Exhibitions That Created Contemporary Art_. In addition to documenta 11, they foreground the 1979 biennials in Sydney, Australia, and São Paulo, Brazil (characterized by “regional dialogue mediating the global/international”); the Triennale-India in New Delhi of 1968, and the Second Biennial in Havana, Cuba, of 1986 (both parts of a longer history, reaching back to the 1950s, of “South-South artistic axes”); the Asia-Pacific Triennial of 1993 in Brisbane, Australia; the Gwaungu, South Korea, Biennale of 1995 (where “difference,” according to Green and Gardner, bypassed “ism”s in favor of “ceaseless flow and change”); and Manifesta, a Europe-based biennial often focused on the Europe of migrations

and contested borders.\textsuperscript{7} Green and Gardner set the stage for thinking about some of the political contradictions produced by the global turn in contemporary art, resulting in what Peter Osborne calls “a new proto-sub-discipline of art history: ‘bienniology,’ ” and specifically the way in which regionally far-ranging shows reproduce global power dynamics through systems of art transport, institutional lending, insurance, publicity, installation, and storage, all of which impede the distribution and display of cultural capital in equal shares.\textsuperscript{8} Still another issue arising from the global mega-exhibit (and one that Green and Gardner neglect to consider), is the impact of sorting mechanisms and units of comparison that maintain bounded cartographic epistemologies and imaginaries. What pervades the epic exhibition is what might be called a \textit{postcolonial reason of region}, or even a kind of regional unconscious, beholden to clichés of the local and susceptible to recrudescence nationalisms that lurk within movement “isms” and period styles. Areas thus tend to be regioned not according to novel ways of conceptualizing them, but according to a kind of geographic determinism.

The curators of Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s—Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, and Rachel Weiss—were not unaware of such problems when they set out to diversify the cartography of a Western-dominant “ism.” They invented the term “global conceptualism” to forge a path through regional dichotomies, drawing out connections between the dematerialization of the art object after Duchamp and the material practices found in much non-Western art. This critical (de)materialism was seen to foster an “affordable way for artists on the geographic margins to participate in international venues.”\textsuperscript{9} But the word “margins” was a red flag, triggering the obvious question: marginal in relation to whom or to what? In the context of the show, “margins” referenced locations in Latin America, Africa, and “places at the edge” (South and Southeast Asia).\textsuperscript{10} Overall the show

\textsuperscript{7} Charles Green and Anthony Gardner, \textit{Biennials, Triennials, and documenta: The Exhibitions That Created Contemporary Art} (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2016), 73, 156.

\textsuperscript{8} Peter Osborne, \textit{The Postconceptual Condition} (New York: Verso, 2018), 115. Osborne’s chapter 7, “Existential Urgency: Contemporaneity, Biennials and Social Form,” is especially relevant to my consideration of regional denomination in the global exhibition.


followed the coordinates of conventional world partition: continent (Africa, Europe, Asia, Arab world), country (Japan, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand), hemisphere (North America, Latin America), imperial legacy (Austro-Hungary, Soviet Bloc), archipelago (Caribbean, Indian Ocean), and so on. Conceptualism was mapped onto these regions according to logics of equivalence and influence: that is, whether they engaged with or had equivalent samples of art and language, institutional critique, and aesthetic autonomy, or what the curators dubbed “art as protagonist.” The direction of influence was outward from Euro-America, and largely nonreciprocal. More striking still, the understanding of Conceptualism, as something that critically assails the foundations of the very terms of aesthetic practice, was never turned loose on the notion of region as such. As a result, old hierarchies of dominant states and metropolitan centers were reinscribed in heuristic frameworks, reproducing the rank order of Europe, the United States, and the rest. The exception to this rule was found in Okwui Enwezor’s catalogue essay titled “Where, What, Who, When: A Few Notes on ‘African’ Conceptualism,” which insisted on the dubious worth of any argument that pleads the case for a region’s inclusion in a movement from which it had been routinely excluded: “What is conceptual art as applied to the conditions that exist in Africa? . . . Is there such a thing as conceptual art in Africa?” Enwezor queried. The answer to these questions was a curiously mixed message: Conceptualism doesn’t really apply to Africa, but here are some examples of African Conceptualism.

Flash forward to 2002, and we find Enwezor in charge of documenta 11, which proved to be a game-changer in the history of mega-exhibitions. What is particularly relevant to the discussion here is how he complicated the presentation of regional identity through nomadic site localization. Physically displacing art and viewer, replacing the hallowed precinct of the gallery institution with “forums” and “intellectual procedures,” and uncorseting the very notion of an exhibition space, Enwezor destabilized notions of space and place.

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11 Ibid., viii–ix.
Platform 1, “Democracy Unrealized,” in Vienna and Berlin, solicited the input of a far-flung cast of postcolonial artists and theorists (Stuart Hall, Homi K. Bhabha, and Wole Soyinka among them) whose work projected intersectional spaces of the political. Platform 2, exhibited in The Hague and New Delhi, took "Transitional Justice and Processes of Truth and Reconciliation" as its theme, wagering that something as visually ineffable as political adjudication could be exhibitable. Platform 3, set on the island of St. Lucia, brought anglophone, hispanophone, and francophone cultures into dialogue around the topic of “Créolité and Creolization,” becoming a model of translational praxis. Platform 4, “Under Siege,” staged in Munich, Lagos, and Dakar, adopted an “African cities” perspective that, with the help of well-resourced Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, offered bird’s-eye and ground-level views of street life: markets, housing formations, and downtown centers. In hindsight, documenta 11 looms large as a landmark experiment with the infrastructure of cartographic difference and the centered mapping of center-periphery. But the massive scale and ambition of its visual archive arguably hindered what could be readily processed as “local” by the viewer. Simply put, the sensory overload and intermedial diffusion of regional sites made location virtually illegible, something of an ephemeral blur. Region gave way to what Molly Nesbit, in the title of her catalog contribution, labeled “the port of call”: the entry or exit point, the border detention center, the camp. While documenta 11, in this respect, was the harbinger of a wave of projects and exhibitions focusing on the “global” condition of mass unsettlement—the movements of stateless refugees and asylum-seekers afflicted by conditions of war, minority persecution, and economic nonsurvival—it nonetheless rendered any clear notion of regional specificity hard to grasp. In the end, what Peter Osborne characterizes as “the migrancy of the image,” as a form of “social distribution,” matched a condition of infinitely capitalized, 

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16 Seyla Benhabib notes in her recently published Exile, Statelessness, and Migration (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018) that over 3.1 percent of the world’s population (or over 244 million people) is composed of international migrants, with a rate of population growth that exceeds the world’s birth rate.
mass-diffused identities produced on digital platforms of distributed images.  

It is in this space of transregionalism that the microhistorical exhibition stakes its claim. Consider, in this regard, the modest, research-based show organized by French-Algerian curator Zahia Rahmani, titled Seismography of Struggle: Towards a Global History of Critical and Cultural Journals, which opened in May 2018 in the vicinity of the Dak’art biennial (at the local gallery RAW MATERIAL) and traveled to the Gallatin Galleries at New York University in fall 2018. The show foregrounded transregional axes traced through geographic groupings infrequently highlighted in aesthetic display: Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia, Arab, African, South Asian, Persian, Caribbean, and native North American diasporas. The show traced through-lines from pre-independence emancipatory movements to tricontinental solidarities at the dawn of the postcolonial era, drawing on the medium of print journalism.

The exhibition A Utopian Stage, curated by Vali Mahlouji and produced in different venues from 2014 to 2019, is similar to Seismography of Struggle in its tricontinental purview and excavational approach. Qualified as a “cultural atlas,” and focusing on the 1960s and 70s in the Global South (the “last” decades of an important historical phase in the life of emancipatory aesthetics), the show attempts to model an expansive notion of the objects of the Non-Aligned Movement, itself deemed a conceptual hallmark of the International Festival of the Arts in Shiraz-Persepolis (1967–77). A Utopian Stage shares with Seismography of Struggle the goal of repurposing the material residues of political history. However, its revisionist frame—“dismantle the narrative of history, recover what was banned and silenced”—is

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17 Peter Osborne notes: “The digitally produced image is a distributed image in the sense that it is open to a tendentially global social distribution via the internet. The dense and extended yet contingent social actualization of the quantitative potential of the indefinite proliferation of visualizations produces a qualitative transformation in the social space, the functions and hence the meanings of the images produced. It is not just images of migrancy that exhibit the politics of a crisis-ridden globalization (the restricted meaning given to the phrase “migrant image” in T. J. Demos’s recent book [The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013)]), but equally the migrancy of the image itself.” Osborne, The Postconceptual Condition, 143.

18 See the publicity material for A Utopian Stage that accompanied the show at the SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin, 2019: https://savvy-contemporary.com/en/projects/2019/a-utopian-stage/.
arguably even more pointed.\textsuperscript{19} A Utopian Stage excavates a festival of the arts historically tainted by Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi’s sponsorship, with an eye to reconfiguring the relationship among art, modernism, and the revolutionary program of the contemporary Global South, and with a focus on transregional alliances and divergences among South Asia and East Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Latin America, and North as well as sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{20} Another operative protocol—modernizing nativists and ritualizing modernists—is designed to dissolve Eurocentric dichotomies between traditional or indigenous arts and avant-garde experimentalism (pillars of Western aesthetic-category theory) and to demonstrate that there is a long, complex history to this dissolution of categories that must be recovered now.

Part database, part voyage through print culture and archives of art, music, film, and performance, these exhibitions share a demand for slow reading, for patience toward non-spectacular visuals, and for critical interrogations of “regional epistemology,” understood not just as region-based categories of discourse and aesthetic practices historically defined by language, culture, canon, geography, and hierarchical units of comparison, but also as a model of transregionalism in which we suddenly perceive how knowledge and cultural legacies are politically parsed at specific temporal and historical conjunctures.

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Axonometric shifts in regional epistemology have been historically marked by watershed publications, particularly in relation to African theory: in 1952, by Frantz Fanon’s \textit{Black Skin, White Masks}, which exposed the instrumentalization of blackness in histories of cultural translation (“les nègres sont comparaison,” “the Negro is comparison”);\textsuperscript{21} in 1986, Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s \textit{Decolonizing the Mind}; in 1988, Valentin Mudimbe’s \textit{The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge}; in 2010, Achille Mbembe’s essay “Africa in Theory”; and in 2013, Mbembe’s \textit{Critique of Black Reason}. Mudimbe’s book proved

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} A similar political project, tracing the imbrication of modernizing pedagogies and the birth of national liberation movements from the 1920s to the 1940s, animates Benjamin Conisbee Baer’s recapture of “residual indigenous collective forms” in \textit{Indigenous Vanguards: Education, National Liberation, and the Limits of Modernism} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).
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pivotal in the effort to decenter European philosophy, with its anchor in the logos of Greek thought, anticipating ongoing ventures in philosophizing in African languages by Souleymane Bachir Diagne.\textsuperscript{22}

Mudimbe reimagined the geography of discourse by insisting on the boundary-shifting uniqueness of African gnosis, cast “as a kind of primordial secret knowledge, that was specific to African languages.”\textsuperscript{23} Conceived as a system of epistemological terms or Untranslatables that could only be distorted in non-African languages, Mudimbe underscored how their sense would inevitably be “inverted and disfigured by western anthropological and philosophical categories.”\textsuperscript{24} He conscripted African gnosis to attack the problem of what he called “regional rationalities” that default to the positing of “an original logic or transhistoric thought.”\textsuperscript{25} His intellectual undertaking—described by Manthia Diawara as nothing short of a “postimperialist discourse that posits a new regime of truth and a new social appropriation of speech”\textsuperscript{26}—extends to questioning the Western concept of history that, by “ordering human activities and social events [strictly] chronologically,” yields “a conjunction of such variables as thought, space, and types of human being.”\textsuperscript{27} Flash forward almost thirty years, and we find Mbembe taking a similar critical stab at re-regionalizing epistemic cartographies, but with theory rather than philosophy as its principal object. “Theory from the Antipodes: Notes on Jean and John Comaroffs’ *Theory from the South,*” published in *The Johannesburg Salon* (2012), is predicated

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item I refer here to Diagne’s ongoing research project “Scenes of Translation,” which studies “situations of asymmetry and domination as in the colonial context,” with emphasis on the “profoundly unequal relationship between languages”; distinctions between sacred and secular languages; and, perhaps most interestingly, a field referred to as “Timbuktu Studies,” which refers (in West Africa) “to a tradition of written scholarship which calls into question the essentialist and reductionist definition of African cultures based in orality. It also highlights the importance of Muslim clerics who were known as ‘the non-europhone intellectuals’. The study of the tradition of study that has been established in intellectual centres the most famous of which is Timbuktu, will also address the question of the philosophical future of African languages through translation.” https://www.iea-nantes.fr/en/chercheurs/diagne-souleymane-bachir-355. See, too, Souleyman Bachir Diagne and Jean-Loup Amselle, *En Quête d’Afrique(s): Universalisme et pensée décoloniale* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2018).
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 187.
\item Manthia Diawara, “Reading Africa through Foucault: V. Y. Mudimbe’s Reaffirmation of the Subject,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 80.
\item Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 187.
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on the Comaroffs’ triple claim that “Euro-America is evolving toward Africa,” that the Global South “affords privileged insight into the workings of the world at large,” and that “our theory-making’ ought to be coming from there, ‘at least in significant part’.” Such claims were supported by the contention that not only is “the global becoming more like the South,” but that the South can be taken as the “frontier in the unfolding history of neoliberalism.” Mbembe is critical of the Manichaean dualism between Euro-America and its others, arguing that the antipodal schema always risks returning Africa to fixity as an abstract entity deprived of historicity and on the brink of “dystopian collapse.” He counters this Manichaeism with “grounded theory,” a materialist geopolitics of knowledge that overrides the disciplinary oppositions endemic to academic global studies. In “Africa in Theory,” an expanded version of the original essay, Mbembe asserts:

In this global cartography of knowledge production, the functions of marginal regions of the world are to produce data and to serve as the test sites of the theory mills of the North. . . . [T]he task of theory, at least in the human sciences, has always been to ask, what characterizes our present and our age? . . . [I]t has been about the “construction of the intelligibility of our time” and about finding out “who is the collective subject that belongs” to that time of ours, as Roland Barthes once put it.

What does Mbembe mean exactly by “theory,” a notorious catch-all signifying vastly different problematics across the disciplinary spectrum? He aligns theory with critical practices and methods that question a truth claim’s sources of legitimation, challenging reflexive appeals to rationalism and the powers residing in dominant discourses. According to Mbembe, theory is defined most clearly when applied: as critical techniques, pedagogical protocols, and modes of existence.

29 Ibid., 64.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
linked to the capitalist mode of production. In a way that bears directly on the Dak’Art Biennial, Mbembe identifies theory with the production of an “image capitalism” designed to produce “circuits of affect, emotion, passion, and conviction.” Elsewhere he associates theory with the regioning of epistemology, recognizing an emergent theory from the South even as he homes in on its nonpolar gray zones. Zones are global regions where culture, distinguished by heritage, custom, and the ancestral shade into identity, understood in terms of religious, ethnic, racial, gender, and national difference. Culture and identity often become blurred, both of them capitalized by the global market and subject to the vicissitudes of state control. In this context, one could say, Mbembe renders cartographies of knowledge legible as monetized spectacles and landscapes of militarization.

He contends that the “hypertechnological enframing of the life-world and the growing implication of art and culture in global systems of militarization of consciousness represent major challenges to critical arts practices. In the militarized landscape of our time (with its obsession with surveillance and security), to ‘demilitarize’ culture itself should become a cornerstone of the new humanities.”

Ngugi’s storied imperative to “decolonize the mind” is thus replaced by the twin injunctions to “demilitarize culture” and “de-capitalize” art’s off-shore spaces, as in the examples of tax havens and redoubts of “duty free art” (I refer here, of course, to Hito Steyerl’s characterization of art parked in freeports, bank vaults, and storage facilities embargoed from the public).

If, for Mbembe, “the world is a method,” it is a world whose epistemic orientation involves critical examination of the “nodes and edges” of a single world system, “understanding regions in their own terms,” and building “a horizontally integrative macrohistory that seeks out connections between events in regions traditionally kept separate” (on the order of Giovanni Arrighi’s *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century*).

 Mbembe attributes Arrighi’s transregional
methodology to his “African experience.” Arrighi’s notions of labor reserves and “accumulation through racial dispossession” are rooted in South Africa and migrate to China because, as Arrighi observes, “Euro-America depends, more than at any time in its history and nowadays in an increasingly parasitic manner, on the productive labor of others.” Here we begin to see how transregional labor and capital, tangible in what Mbembe calls “the racial subsidy or discount,” produce cartographies contoured by human exploitation and racial violence. In Mbembe’s Critique of Black Reason, for instance, reason is underwritten by the concept of zoning, itself profoundly marked by the history of chattel slavery, carceral regimes of apartheid, necropolitics, and the cynegetic (hunt-based) management of territory:

Zoning practices are linked in general to transnational networks of repression whose tools and methods include the imposition of ideological grids on populations, the hiring of mercenaries to fight local guerillas, the formation of “hunt commandos,” and the systematic use of mass imprisonment, torture, and extrajudicial execution. This “imperialism of disorganization,” which feeds on anarchy, leverages practices of zoning to manufacture disasters and multiply states of exception nearly everywhere.

The zone as a cartographic unit of theoretical analysis maps Western reason onto brutal forms of racial repression throughout continental Africa and its diasporas. Blackness and race are at one point compared to “the nuclear power plant”—a zone of lethal industrialism—from which hails the entire “modern project of knowledge—and of governance.” Where, for Mudimbe, what was paramount was

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39 Ibid., 229.
40 “Racial subsidies” (179) is translator Laureent Dubreuil’s faithful rendering of “sубсидии рабочей силы” in Mbembe’s original Critique de la raison nègre (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), 257. The expression derives from a bio-economy in which Blackness is produced by “a social link of subjection and a body of extraction, that is, a body entirely exposed to the will of the master, a body from which great effort is made to extract maximum profit.” There is then, according to Mbembe’s argument, a raced subvention of capitalist accumulation that must be part of the contemporary calculation of racial debt and reparation. See Achille Mbembe, Critique of Black Reason, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 18.
41 Mbembe, Critique of Black Reason, 5.
42 Ibid., 2.
the regional specificity of African gnosis, understood as indigenous philosophy comprising names and expressions that are at once incomparable and untranslatable, for Mbembe, zones, as in the Agambenian “zones of indistinction” found in concentration camps and the Muselmann’s tenuous condition of existence, bring into relief what he calls “the blackening of the world.” As a heuristic unit, the zone, unlike bordered communities or sovereign nations, is forensically and financially indeterminate. It models a topography of murderous violence (ethnocide, enslavement, quarantine, indefinite incarceration) and a topology of creative destruction through finance capital (that is quasi-invisible and virtual, as in the algorithms of flash-trading, or the zones of what Mbembe has dubbed “afrocomputation”). At once materially grounded and immaterially diffused, the zone is nothing short of a prime theorem for necropolitics: a biopolitics that stresses death centers, racism, lethal industrialism, delirium, and disease. In addition, it encompasses the causeways and matrices of power that define the long, pre- and postcapitalist history of African economics, including Africa’s actual and anticipated triangulation in the rising fortunes of India and China. In Mbembe’s dispositif—where “theory” cannot be thought without reference to the distribution of the racial subsidy, and where “world” can no longer refer exclusively to a planetary abstraction, but to a cartography regioned by death zones—we find a whole new ascription of “area studies.”

The politics of area-ization is fraught, as we know. It may allow access to moments that have been moved off the historical record, but it also produces barriers and conflicting phenomenologies of the border, even when the objective is to foment class solidarities and internationalist alliances. Consider the way the “Three Worlds Theory” changed footing. For Mao, who invented the construct, “First” denoted the

43 Mbembe, Critique of Black Reason, 1.
44 Achille Mbembe, “Afrocomputation,” interview with Bregtje van der Haak, Multitudes, no. 69 (2017): 198–204. Afrocomputation is used in direct reference to the transfigurative and transmutational effect of the widespread introduction of cellphones into African everyday life. Mbembe proposes an African model of digital animism and marketed, monetized attention span, together embedded in corporate media empires. This produces zones on the African continent that weaken the influence of sovereign borders and rezone existence according to the organizational fluxes of global communications systems and information networks.
superpowers, “Second” the lesser powers, and “Third,” the exploited nations. Later, in Cold War parlance, “First” designated the United States, the United Kingdom, and their allies; “Second,” the Soviet Union, China, and their allies; and “Third,” the nonaligned countries. Later on, “Fourth” entered circulation as a category for the marginalized populations of industrial sectors: subsistence farmers, nomads, the stateless, and ethnic and religious minorities targeted by sovereign nations. Like regional or linguistic cartographic names, the ordering of “worlds” enters the currency of area studies, generating a structurally “class-ified” map of over- and underdevelopment that reproduces the very hierarchies it set out to overcome. Class, highlighted by the problematic “Fourth World” category, nonetheless retains its force as a premier mobilizing term for transregional politics. Certainly one task for any new cartography of knowledge—ultimately a task of translation—would be to underscore transregional class alliances within a “global criticality.”

It was Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who came up with the term “global criticality,” in response to Aijaz Ahmed’s case against the expression the Global South, which in his view accepts capitalist globalization. Ahmed argued, as would Robert Young, for replacing “Global South” with “Tricontinental” and its adjoined regional specifications: Africa, America, and Asia. This return to a Bandung/Non-Alignment model of sorts (with a nod to an East/South project in the Initiative of Five—Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Ghana—and, much later, the BRICS quintet of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) stipulates a serial denomination of individual nations and cultures. This approach does not exactly obviate the need for expedient political vocabularies of geographical territory emphasizing political solidarities, as in Vijay Prashad’s use of “Global South” to designate issue-based movements united in protest against neoliberalism, but it questions amorphous categories such as North and South, European and non-European, Western and non-Western, Third and

First Worlds. It militates instead for a disciplinary consciousness that no longer ignores the heterogeneity of spaces and the lack of homogeneity in regions beyond the metropolis.

Critical translation, when applied to area naming and the disciplinary procedures that arise from familiar geopolitical alignments, supplements the kind of theoretical work implicit in Kris Manjapra’s paradigm of “entanglement,” foregrounded in his book *Age of Entanglement.* The term is employed not in reference to a centripetal force or coming-together, as in the smooth weave of David Damrosch’s Goethean global compact of world literature, or Ranjan Ghosh’s gravitationally drawn “infusional” aesthetics, but in relation to a frictive intertwining describing punctual and utilitarian logics of encounter that elude structural models of historical interpretation or teleologies of emancipation. Injecting a dose of realpolitik into comparative analysis, *Age of Entanglement* provides a granular vision of transregional cosmopolitics. It shines a light on political histories long obscured by colonial historical narratives that privilege the British/India dyad, or such terms as “Enlightenment,” “Europe,” and “empire.” Proposing “dynamics that challenge conceptions of neat, regional, national, and geopolitical divides,” Manjapra engages comparative thinking that transcends the hegemonic categories of nation, metropole, periphery, and hemisphere, or such big, de-regionalized philosophical constructs as alterity or autonomy: “As opposed to studying encounters in terms of the pity of colonial domination, or else in terms of the charms of cross-cultural encounter, a new study of entanglement would ask: what do different groups, some stronger, some weaker, get out of their political relations

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49 Reference is made here to David Damrosch’s book *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). The book became the fulcrum of a larger movement to revive world literature as a paradigm of literary studies. It spawned multiple anthologies and curricular initiatives that were wide and inclusive in scope. While this movement diversified the curriculum, it also had the effect of flattening the global canon by relying on terms of comparison that encouraged equivalence and what I criticized as a “translatability assumption” in my book *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013).

together?\footnote{51} This agonistic approach—and it is here that we can draw an explicit connection to translation—emphasizes complex processes of what he terms “dialogic interdependence,” which focus attention on how intellectual production, texts of media, disciplinary institutions, and personal histories, often artificially sequestered from each other across national or neocivilizational divides, are in fact co-constituting and implicated in the struggle for new power on earth. Grasping that dimension of interconnection emboldens us to rethink periodization and our understanding of intellectual history within interregional frameworks.\footnote{52}

It is precisely these inter- or transregional processes of ever-differentiating difference that bring us to the kind of translational cosmopolitics implicit in what I earlier characterized as a process of “regioning differences”—which is to say, locating, situating, and identifying political formations in cartographic locations that defy naming and translation and are prone to constant retranslation.

Naeem Mohaiemen’s installation \textit{Volume Eleven (flaw in the algorithm of cosmopolitanism)}, first shown on the pages of \textit{South as a State of Mind} #6 in 2016\footnote{53} and then exhibited as a wall installation in 2018 at MoMA P.S. 1 (curated by Peter Eleey), engages this political concept of regional entanglement at every level. The project consists of a diptych series with text-image pairings displayed on the wall like open books arrayed in a narrative sequence. Manjapra’s work is explicitly invoked as a point of departure, which makes sense, since his spotlight on the Germany/India axis in transnational history turned out to be uncannily present in a family archive unearthed by the artist.\footnote{54} When Mohaiemen began translating the writings of his great-uncle Syed

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
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\item[51] Manjapra, \textit{Age of Entanglement}, 6.
\item[52] Manjapra, \textit{Age of Entanglement}, 291.
\item[53] Documenta 141, no. 1, eds. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (Kassel: Documenta, 2016).
\item[54] The discovery of Manjapra’s work in 2010 and the perusal of his book in 2016 proved to be a crucial turning point in Mohaiemen’s project, which aimed to string together different aspects and moments marked by the Indo-German alliance—in academia, literature, politics, the literary history of his great uncle, as well as Tagore and others. As he came to realize, “the collective experience of unsteady alliances opened up the space to think of these [his great-uncle’s] essays as something more than just individual folly” [Mohaiemen in an email, June 11, 2018]. From 1929 to 1932, his great-uncle, Syed Mujtaba Ali, went to Germany via a Wilhelm Humboldt scholarship and studied at the universities in Berlin and later in Bonn. He earned his PhD from Bonn with a dissertation on comparative religious studies in 1932. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syed_Mujtaba_Ali.
\end{thebibliography}
Mujtaba Ali—a well-known translator (fluent in fifteen languages), Bengali travelogue writer, and short-story author whose books were popular in united Bengal during and after World War II—Mohaiemen was shocked to discover material revealing his identification with Nazi Germany. “Quite a few unpublished essays/have been collected/in this final volume, . . . I clutch at straws./Perhaps these were discarded drafts. . . . I search for footnotes. Perhaps he wrote these in 1923? National Socialism had not bared all its fangs./So much unknowing. . . . The Bengali dates on his essays don’t help.”

Mujtaba Ali had been in Germany studying linguistics and philosophy during Hitler’s ascendency and was pulled into the orbit of Nazi ideology via the familiar logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Accordingly, we read in one of the diptychs: “My enemy’s enemy. . . . Both sides using each other./Entangled, united, deluded.”

Germany was, in Mujtaba Ali’s estimation (and he was not alone, as Manjapra shows), the only hegemon capable of defeating Britain and liberating India from colonial rule. This “flaw in the algorithm of cosmopolitanism,” which refuses to stand clear of noxious political alli-

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ances or moments of defeat and failure in the history of transnational solidarity movements, yields insight into obscured episodes in political history. Entangled history affords sideways glances at lateral networks, ill-fitting incidents, and encounters. It features select images whose enlarged pixilation blurs rather than clarifies the fugitive outlines of official history. It unmoors the temporal frames of historical progression by projecting specters of untimeliness. Fragments from his great-uncle’s notebooks of the 1930s, citations from Arendt’s (reviled at the time) landmark 1963 essay “The Banality of Evil,” and the narrator’s present-day musings are spliced, bringing “what happened” into proximity with “what might have been” in the viewfinder of historical retrospection. This temporal destabilization introduces possible worlds and counterfactual history into comparative political analysis. What if India had broken away from Britain and joined forces with the Third Reich? Did this alliance manquée leave its stamp on the history of decolonization, or the political lineage, built up since 1945, of the Modi regime (Modi is said to have been formed by fascist-leaning ideologues)? How can the history that remains unexhumed in archives and family papers be made intelligible within the shifting frames of past, present, and future? These are questions that Volume Eleven elicits but resists answering, leaving the viewer with a prompt to go on to read more, for the penultimate line of the work is “don’t read volume eleven only.” In place of a dialectics of emancipation or historical resolution, Mohaiemen gestures toward a procedure: he fills in the canvas of “unexceptional politics,” an expression I have developed to refer to a politics that devolves not from states of emergency or conditions of urgency, nor from structures of governmentality, representation, deliberation, or policing (as defined by classical political theory), but rather from a micropolitics tangible only behind the scenes, below the radar, or within the affective atmospheres of psychopower.

56 The expression “flaw in the algorithm of cosmopolitanism” comes from a conversation between Mohaiemen and artist Jaret Vadera, whose work often looks at machine language and cyber technology.

57 The term psychopower is drawn directly from Bernard Stiegler’s “psychopouvoir,” an extension and meld of Michel Foucault’s seminal concept of “biopower” and Gilles Deleuze’s notion of the control society. Stiegler references a range of cognitive technologies: from mediatic attention capture (whose effect is akin to hypnosis), to the domination of concentration by the powers of marketing, consumption, and information production, complex motivational structures and affects that undergird economies of hyper-materialism (a thesis advanced in Economie de l’hypermatériel et psychopouvoir, 2008).
Language, too, provides a medium of entangled politics at the micro-scale. The narrator in *Volume Eleven* often plays the role of translator, whether arbitrating a translation’s quality—“Also a false translation or two./Does ‘Mahatyo’ translate to/‘Greatness’ or ‘Achievement’?”—or gleaning insights from discrepancies across languages: “I put on a lot of makeup./Meeting a bideshi mem, I wanted to look bright./Well, I have not translated ‘forsha’ correctly./It does not really mean bright./It means light-skinned. . . . Did Ali’s forsha skin help?/Help him pass as white/in Germany year zero?” Here, the spotlight on translation praxis as something difficult to achieve without error or lost nuance is aligned with the difficulty of plotting race and class politics on an interlinguistic, transtemporal, transregional continuum. In this instance, the

The insistence on psychology as *technics*, that is, as a form of information processing that is *indistinct from technology* inflects Stiegler’s use of the related terms “psychotechnologies” or “psychotropes.” There is considerable theoretical novelty here. Stiegler is not simply referring to mind control of the kind found in Cold War conspiracy theory, religious cults, or policing and interrogation tactics, but also to brave new worlds of cognitive rewiring that produce modes of existence and forms of subjectivation.

The transtemporal dimension refers quite specifically in this context to the gap between the Bengali and Roman calendars, crucially implicated for Mohaiemen in solving the puzzle of when exactly Ali composed these essays (1932? 1935? 1937? 1939?). As Mohaiemen has noted (in email, June 11, 2018): “the more the calendar shifts, the more the burden of guilt.”
mélange of English and Bengali, culled from letters that record hierarchies of skin tone and stories of racial passing in forgotten corners of history, lends density to the imbrication of intra-Indian, British colonial, and Nazi eugenicist racial ideologies.

In *Volume Eleven*, language-in-translation becomes the medium of choice for an investigation of transregional political entanglement. In Mohaiemen’s three-channel digital video installation *Two Meetings and a Funeral* (2017), shown at documenta 14 in Kassel, full use is made of the “vacuum space” of the Palais des Nations in Algiers, which housed the meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1973. The building’s infrastructure—canted concrete walls, meeting rooms, corridors—becomes a stage for restaging the ideological tension that arose after the 1974 Lahore conference of the Organization for Islamic

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The work’s title, *Two Meetings and a Funeral*, is an engaging play on the title of Mike Newell’s syrupy romcom *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), which starred Hugh Grant in a role based closely on his actual persona. A South Korean LGBT classic, *Two Weddings and a Funeral*, directed by Kim Jho Kwang-soo in 2012, is also implicitly referenced. Mohaiemen’s substitution of “two meetings” for “two weddings” alludes to the project of global socialist revolution and interregional cooperation between nonaligned and newly independent nations articulated at the NAM meetings of 1973 and 1974. The “funeral” part of the equation refers to the failed or stymied history of the nonaligned project, as CIA-backed coups and Saudi and Organization of Islamic Cooperation interventions took their toll.
Cooperation (OIC). Mohaiemen puts into relief the “before” of non-aligned optimism (punctuated by excerpts from addresses by Kaunda, Boumedienne, Arafat, Castro, Madame Binh, Indira Gandhi, and Gaddafi) alongside the “after” of emergent “warring tentacles of the ‘new’ cold war, and the contradictions of decolonization movements that neglected to liberate their own leadership.”

This bitemporal, tri-continental micropolitics, secreted into the shells of buildings that hold the memory of failed socialist experiments [“the fatal mistake of a 1970s pivot from socialism to islamism (wrapped around pan arabism)”], is constitutive of a political materialism at the liminotrope of the perceptible. In an interview with Sarah Lookofsky, Mohaiemen tracked this phenomenon in terms of contingent encounters, backroom machinations, and jockeying for position that make for “small-p” political groundswells of disunity and historical impasse:

The real event is the backroom meeting, where there is no camera rolling. The conversations over endless coffees and cigarettes were where decisions were made. In NAM, Bandung’s Afro-Asian unity proposal is no longer dominant. Those who were wary of Soviet expansionism wanted to have their own zone of influence—NAM was also a power bloc, and it was never innocent of those maneuvers. Since there was still a socialist commitment, there should have been class alliances that span all member nations. But NAM also included the OPEC bloc countries, which were not always signaling to socialism—so they’re an uneasy fit. These contradictions come spilling out in the small, offstage visual moments of the conference.

The technical task at hand is relatively straightforward, it involves zooming: tracking with what Mohaiemen calls an “impassive camera” the little-observed or lost details tucked away in the media archeology of postindependence movements. It is by regarding entangled history


61 Ibid.

in close-up—the shifting facial expressions of earphone-sporting delegates as they process (or fail to process) translations of the proceedings, or the passing reference by a national leader to Salvador Allende’s absence (he would be assassinated in a CIA-backed coup a mere two days after the 1973 NAM meeting)—that we come to grasp more fully what it means to fall in and out of “alignment,” with all the ideological and aesthetic complexities that term entails:

In one newsreel, you see Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia saying onstage, “We wish our brother, Salvador Allende, to prevail,” and then we learn that Allende was assassinated four days later. NAM appears to be, in that scene, opposed to military juntas. Yet, when the impassive camera pans, there are other Latin American leaders attending in full military gear! So NAM fails to take up a position that welcomes only democratic countries. This is a contradiction that jumps out in the long, slow visual record of the meetings. It is not so much what is onstage, but what gets picked up as the camera roves and happens upon chance encounters in a cavernous meeting hall. During the extended credit sequence, if you watch closely, you start to notice who gets up from their table to greet which leader. Also, who stands up first, and who stays seated—these are all part of the archaeology, a way to map the bodily expressions of hierarchy and power.63

This archived history of entanglement, trained on micropolitical encounters that linger in ghost buildings and manuscripts, finds its complement in a project included in the Dak’Art 2018 Biennial by Senegalese artist Cheikh Ndiaye. His installation in the main hall of the Dakar Palais de Justice, titled Brise-soleil des indépendances (Sunshades of Independence), reconstructed the leftovers of a building demolition: the famous Independence Hotel, designed by Henri Chomette in the early 1970s. The hotel anchored Dakar’s Independence Square, itself the site of multiple demonstrations, starting with protests ignited by General de Gaulle’s 1958 speech and continuing to the present day. Ndiaye re-created the striking brise-soleil façade with its blink-

ing interplay of solids and voids arrayed next to rubble heaps on the floor space that resemble little burial mounds.

These remnants commemorate the current government’s dismantling of Dakar’s patrimony of architectural modernism and inattention to the preservation of its colonial and postcolonial archives. Along the walls of the installation, Ndiaye stacked paintings and photographs of past liberation struggles, as if to invite the viewer to set about sorting through the archive. These fading photos and framed news items, with their headlines recalling unremembered protests and political struggles, augment the haunting effect produced by the dead-wall apertures of the dismantled hotel’s window design. An architectural carcass that bespeaks historical ruin, yes, but alternatively, through the sun-screen (*brise-soleil*), there is a glimpse of a political project for future “africivists.” Recalling, too, Rahmani’s deployment of “seismography”
in her exhibition title—a term borrowed from earthquake science to emphasize the destabilizing impact of political independence movements shuddering across the continents of the decolonial world—Ndiaye’s rubble of pre-independence building infrastructure suggests a kind of “going to ground” that countervails the effects of abstracted globalism.

Ndiaye and Mohaiemen’s projects, like Enwezor’s, Rahmani’s, Mahlouji’s, and Mbembe, Spivak, and Manjapra’s tricontinental geographies, limn a transdisciplinary nexus where we see debates converging around the politics of transregionalism and inflecting the practical organization of exhibitions, the pragmatic concerns with the distribution of resources in area studies, and the comparative humanities more generally. Though disparate in medium and objective, these artistic statements represent ways of addressing (with no pretense at resolving) the problem of regioning differences “differently,” rezoning the colonial nomos, revisualizing obscured regional histories, and rethinking the category theory of aesthetic cartographies.