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Editor's Introduction

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PICTURE ANIDA YOEU ALI, the artist featured on the cover of this issue, standing with her back exposed, water and black ink dripping down to stain the ragged edges of her white dress. What has been inscribed on Ali's back are reminders of overlapping histories invoked by her Cambodian Muslim American past. Phrases like "Khmer Rouge Regime," "Family Trip: Niagara Falls," "From Somewhere Else," and "Site of Tourism and Atrocities" (among others) are juxtaposed, overwritten, and ultimately bleed into each other before being rendered illegible, impossible to fully trace, and only visible as stain once the artist leaves the installation space and all that remains is the disembodied dress.

This performance—inspired by Maxine Hong Kingston's retelling of the Fa Mulan story in *The Woman Warrior*—functions as a "textile testimonial," and I'm especially intrigued by the ways in which it suggests a more expansive way to conceptualize mapping history, identity, and place. As Cathy J. Schlund-Vials astutely notes in her analysis of Ali's work in this issue's *Portfolio* feature, the "cartographic coordinates" mapped onto Ali's back can only be understood in relation to the "absent presences" of the Killing Fields and their ongoing aftereffects. As such, any attempt to chart the various intersections between history, identity, and place must, of necessity, also acknowledge the dynamism of multiple migrations and returns as well as the embodied dimensions of cartography's cognitive and conceptual projects.

Although mapping as a kind of generic metaphor for constructing intellectual frameworks has thoroughly saturated humanistic fields of inquiry,

especially in response to and as a reflection of the various geographically oriented turns signaled by “beyond nation,” “transpacific,” “regional/regionness,” and “Global North/South” approaches, perhaps some more targeted attention to recent developments in theories of mapping might help us usefully expand—in conjunction with alternative forms of mapping as enacted by Ali’s performance—the ways in which we understand conceptual plotting to be both an epistemological endeavor and a series of ontological possibilities.

As Rob Kitchin, Chris Perkins, and Martin Dodge (2009) demonstrate in their introductory survey to *Rethinking Maps: New Frontiers in Cartographic Theory*, the philosophical terrain of contemporary cartography is itself quite dynamic, and there are ongoing assessments of how theories of mapping have shifted attention from the map itself as an object of knowledge to the manifold ways in which maps operate postrepresentationally. Specifically, they highlight how postrepresentational theories of mapping have directed critical attention to maps as *inscriptions* (John Pickles’s [2004] conceptualization of maps as producers rather than mirrors of the world), *propositions* (Dennis Wood and John Fels’s [2008] definition of maps as ideological constructions that produce the world through the spatial ontologies they advance), *immutable mobiles* (Bruno Latour’s [1987] understanding of how formalized protocols of mapping create maps as “a stable, combinable, transferable form of knowledge that is portable across space and time”), *actants* (ANT-influenced social science paradigms of maps as historically contingent objects that are actualized through their interactions with other actants and actors), and *practices* (James Corner’s [1999] emphasis on maps as forms of enablement; Vincent J. Del Casino and Stephen P. Hanna’s [2005] poststructuralist conceptualization of “map spaces” that are co-constituted by both the makers and the users of maps).

Coupled with Ali’s enactment of mapping as embodied relationality, these diverse ways of conceptualizing the possibilities and limits of cartography helpfully offer us a diversified way of thinking about the complicated mappings that the work in this issue—and indeed any issue—of *Verge* attempts. Even as these concepts make evident the challenges of mapping any geographical location like Asia, they also make manifest the impossibilities and potential of mapping Global Asias, that conceptually determined site that insists on its own indeterminacy and plurality as much as its global expanse.

This issue’s **Convergence** section begins with an A&Q that attempts to map the fault lines between the academic discipline of political science and

the interdisciplinary academic fields of area studies and ethnic studies. In response to questions about the potential incompatibilities between disciplinary methods and field methods, four political scientists working in disparate fields—comparative ethnic studies (Fred Lee), East Asian studies (Erin Aeran Chung), Asian American studies (Janelle S. Wong), and Southeast Asian studies (Erik Martinez Kuhonta)—meditate on both the constraints and prospects of working intersectionally or with a mixed-methods methodology. Although each respondent recognizes the ways that area and cultural knowledges often are subordinated to the epistemological and methodological priorities of political science as a disciplinary formation, a subordination that is aggravated by the methodological battles within political science itself between quantitative and qualitative methods, all of the contributors also suggest that it is possible to work synergistically between discipline and interdiscipline. As long as one understands what Donald K. Emmerson (2008) has identified as the “terms of enlistment”—the meanings and conditions that locate disparate institutional knowledge formations in relation to each other—that structure our research, these terms might be renegotiated such that a range of scholarly approaches can exist at points beyond the extremes of either mutual alienation or disciplinary hegemony.

In her meta-response essay to the A&Q essays, Leela Fernandes usefully reminds us that “if the relationship between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity is to be fully addressed—both in relation to the study of Asia/Asian diasporas and in relation to the broader question of knowledge production—it requires an exploration of the ways in which interdisciplinary fields of analysis (and their institutionalized sites) may also become disciplined by the cross-disciplinary formations that are dominant within them.” Fernandes points out how the increasing marginalization of political science impacts the conditions of knowledge formation in South Asian studies in ways as overt as low levels of participation by political scientists at area studies conferences and as subtle as reinforcing certain styles, methods, and theories as exemplary of “cutting-edge interdisciplinarity.” Collectively, the contributors to A&Q illuminate the possibilities of mapping as practice in their collaborative demonstration of how questions of method are always about the enablement of intellectual legitimacy.

Key to postrepresentational mapping theory is an acknowledgment of how changing modes of production and new technologies make possible heightened attention to the interaction between map and user. This issue’s *Interface* profiles the Center for Art and Thought (CA+T), a web-based non-profit that harnesses the potential of digital and new media technologies

to facilitate dialogues between artists, scholars, and the broader public. CA+T understands global processes through the experiences of the Filipino diaspora. As Jan Bernabe, Clare Counihan, and Sarita Echavez See exemplify through their analysis of *Sea, Land, Air: Migration and Labor*, CA+T's inaugural virtual exhibit, mapping always entails perspective. While too often that perspective is a view from somewhere that gets universalized, CA+T's attentiveness to the Filipino diaspora "as a point of departure—rather than a point of arrival—for bringing into focus and understanding other histories, spaces, and communities" illuminates how the digital curation of such focalization serves as an invitation for users to participate in the mapping of CA+T's resources and engagements. Excitingly, the possibilities afforded by digital curation—archiving unconstrained by physical storage, a processual release of exhibit materials, the spatial unfixing of knowledge exchange—do more than enable CA+T to operate as an example of "cultural digital mobility that challenges the segregation between 'art' and 'scholarship.'" They also make possible a more interactive engagement between user and platform, the ability to create a "rhizomatic exhibition experience" that is participatory and continually evolving.

New technologies such as those employed by CA+T sometimes render invisible older technologies as technology. Our third **Convergence** feature, a *Field Trip* on "Book Histories, Material Culture, and East Asian Studies," begins with author Ann Sherif's engagement with the book as a physical object and opens up into a survey of how book studies (or history of the book) is a multidisciplinary field that "describes and analyzes the production, consumption, preservation, and destruction of the technologies [and] cultural modes" of not just individual books but entire "book worlds." In evoking a geographical image for her survey of the field, Sherif argues for the importance of challenging the universalist assumptions of Western book history scholarship, especially its persuasive identification of the printing press as signal technological change agent, and the emphasis on nation-state book cultures in East Asian book studies. By attending to the regionally interrelated yet locally distinctive book cultures of East Asia and their various points of intersection and divergence, scholars can more effectively map shared cultural contexts, different reading practices, and alternative patterns of circulation.

Circulation—of books and of people—is a dynamic movement that sometimes exceeds a map's representational capacity. So too is contestation and the frictive jockeying for territories already claimed and disputed. As the rise of ISIL attests, mapping new territory can be a violent act. We are witness to how ideologies are inscribed and proposed through

cartographic claiming. In our final **Convergence** feature, Cathy J. Schlund-Vials introduces us to the multifaceted work of Anita Yoeu Ali, an activist/artist whose “agitative artistic politics” are designed to direct attention to the causes and consequences of Islamophobia. Such a project seems especially urgent at this moment when civil war rages in Syria, the Middle East is fractured by religious and sectarian violence, how to welcome and manage refugees is a globally contested issue, and the political climate of the West both fosters and reflects an unprecedented increase in anti-Muslim bigotry. As I have already suggested, while such conditions cannot be adequately captured in any single map, the work of artists like Ali might offer us different ways of coordinating and contextualizing the markers of past and present, here and there, home and away. Schlund-Vials traces Ali’s development as an artist from her early involvement with the Asian American spoken word performance ensemble I Was Born with Two Tongues to her participation in Chicago-based feminist collective Mango Tribe to her more recent work as a multidisciplinary transnational performance artist. Through her detailed attention to Ali’s transnationally conceptualized project *The Red Chador*, which highlights ongoing racial violence centered on religious identification and iconography, Schlund-Vials demonstrates how Ali’s efforts to elicit unplanned and unscripted audience responses through her performance of the silent, inscrutable, and brilliantly sequined figure of “The Red Chador” generated multivalent engagements in diverse cities (Paris; Hartford, Connecticut; and Washington, D.C.) and diverse contexts (galleries, subway stations, cafés, the Smithsonian). Ali’s commitment to embodiment—whether as The Red Chador or as the unnamed woman with ink and water running down her back—signals a mapping practice that is equally attentive to what is erased as it is to what is remembered.

The lead **Essay** for this issue is a wonderfully generative argument about transpacific circulation, global modernity, and ways of reading that exceed the discrete boundaries that separate Asian American literatures and Asian literary production. In “Oceanic Etymologies: Shanghai and the Transpacific Routes of Global Modernity,” Steven Yao considers Shanghai not so much as a geopolitical locus but as a “polylingual verbal sign that appears in literary works from around the Pacific Rim as a figure or trope for the increasingly global scale of interactions that together make up economic and cultural modernity.” Beginning with John Yau’s poem “Shanghai Shenanigans” (1981), Yao illustrates the limits of reading Shanghai in biographical or referential terms, instead gesturing to the productive interpretive possibilities of reading Shanghai as “verbal

token and historical impetus for experimentation with prevailing conventions of literary form and their associated protocols of legibility in various languages and locations around the Pacific Ocean.” Yao argues that “charting this terrain” will clarify Asian American literature’s complicated relation to modernist literary traditions and practices across Asia. Traveling through multiple ports of call—including New York, Hollywood, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Kobe—Yao carefully reads Mu Shi Ying (穆時英)’s “The Shanghai Foxtrot (a Fragment)” (上海的狐步舞-一個端片) (1932), Yokomitsu Riichi’s *Shanghai* (serially published between 1928 and 1931), and Tani Joji’s “The Shanghaied Man” (上海された男) (1925) to demonstrate how Shanghai as “figure, sign, and *topos*” indexes the crisscrossing circuits of the cultural flow that accompanies the global spread of modernity.

In “Semioscapes, Unbanality, and the Reinvention of Nationness: Global Korea as Nation-Space,” Jerry Won Lee undertakes a semiotic analysis of how diaspora communities continually reinvent nationness through the use of symbolic resources in public space. Lee proposes that the “unbanality,” which he defines as “singular conspicuousness,” of Koreanness achieved through reconfigurations of space in Koreatowns across Asia and North America permits the reinvention of nation outside the nation-state. Building on Arjun Appadurai’s (2001) notion of “process geographies” as geographies that map “significant areas of human organization as precipitates of various kinds of action, interaction, and motion—trade, travel, pilgrimage, warfare, proselytization, colonization, exile, and the like” (7), Lee advances a notion of the “semioscape” to highlight how “the ways in which everyday actors use language and semiotic resources to reconfigure space disrupt the very boundedness of communities to politically defined territories.” Crucially, Lee’s attention to the semiosis of space through his analysis of architectural choices and Koryo as chronotope develops criteria other than location and authenticity to understand distinctions between state and space.

The complicated interrelationship between location and authenticity is explored in Abigail De Kosnik’s “Perfect Covers: Filipino Musical Mimicry and Transmedia Performance.” Focusing on mimicry as a key characteristic of a certain “Filipino brand,” De Kosnik argues that the international success of Filipino cover artists has helped to cement the reputation of Filipinos as excellent mimics suitable not only as performance labor but also as call center workers, nurses, and domestic help. De Kosnik adapts comparative media scholar Henry Jenkins’s (2007) notion of transmedia, wherein corporations use multiple platforms to build different components of complex fictional worlds, to analyze the ways in which Filipinos

have individually leveraged new media technologies and the Internet to transmediate their imitative skills to a global marketplace. As De Kosnik persuasively demonstrates, Filipinos' multiplatform performances of their mimetic talent are intimately tied to the United States's "twisted kinship with the Philippines" and can be analyzed as an effort to remap ongoing colonial legacies.

If mapping is always in some ways propositional, an effort to advance certain ideological positions and produce the world through the spatial ontologies they construct, then opportunities to highlight this constructive aspect of mapping are on special display at the World's Fair. In "The Biopolitics of Gratitude and Equivalence: Debt, Exchange, and Disaster Politics at the Shanghai World's Fair," Jennifer Hubbert draws on fieldwork undertaken at the 2010 Shanghai Expo to examine how "disaster politics" illuminate the politics of citizenship in the narrative constructed about the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Engaged with recent scholarship in anthropology that links humanitarianism to biopolitical processes, Hubbert's examination of how Expo representations functioned as a technology of power does not assume the automatic triumph of biopolitical regulation. Instead, Hubbert focuses on the "structural prerequisites necessary for the state to accomplish its sovereignty project within the framework of humanitarian praxis" in an effort to focus "not on what a biopolitics of humanitarianism *does* but on what a biopolitics of humanitarianism *theoretically needs* to accomplish its goals." She draws attention to how victims of the earthquake were brought into the state's modernity project through a "biopolitics of gratitude" while volunteers were constructed as representatives of such state-sanctioned modernity through a "biopolitics of equivalence." Tellingly, the biopolitical dimensions of the disaster politics studied in this **Essay**, while overdetermined by the state, are also subject to alternative assessments. Such tensions bespeak the possibility of refusing the state's implied exchange of obligation for its help.

The tensions underlying China's rise within Asia and in the world are also the subject of Fan Yang's **Essay**, "Temporality and Shenzhen Urbanism in the Era of 'China Dreams.'" Yang argues that temporality, the complex and uneven relation to time, is central to understanding urbanism in Shenzhen, the first Special Economic Zone set up in 1979 by Deng Xiaoping. Yang's doubled perspective—deriving from her teenage years growing up in Shenzhen from 1986 to 1996 and her 2014 fieldwork in the city—creates a distinctive opportunity to map the incongruent, multiple temporalities that continue to structure the city despite its reputation for a kind of "Shenzhen Speed" that is always directed at the future.

In her productive attunement to Shenzhen as a “polyrhythmic space,” Yang’s work utilizes Henri LeFebvre’s concept of “rhythmanalysis” to allow for a more critical engagement with the city and its inhabitants’ heterogeneous relations to time and space. The result helps “to remap a geopolitical imagination of China/Asia that resituates these spaces and practices in the third world or Global South.”

Josephine Nock-Hee Park shares this interest in the remapping of a geopolitical imagination in this issue’s final **Essay**, “‘A Strange Form of Love’: The Global Asian American Subject in Richard E. Kim’s *The Martyred*.” Focused on Kim’s 1964 existential account of the Korean War as narrated by a South Korean officer, the first part of the essay explores the novel’s central mystery of Christian martyrdom in the context of a modern history of religious revivals in Korea, while the second half of the argument turns to the politics of the skeptical figure of the protagonist. Park reads the novel’s “Cold War universalism as a significant and continuing mode of securing an American audience without the comforts of sentiment.” According to Park, Christina Klein’s reading of the middlebrow imagination elaborates a new mapping of Asia that aimed “‘to replace a national imaginary based on separation from a global imaginary based on connection’ (Klein 2003, 13), and in Richard E. Kim’s curious fiction, we discover a highbrow aspiration derived from the modes of Cold War integration Klein significantly revealed as the other side of the coin of Manichean division.” Through her careful analysis of how Kim enacts a Cold War alignment through his existential novel, Park shows how converting political interests into philosophical terms reveals an ongoing process by which Asians become Americans.

By reading the work collected in this issue of *Verge* through the insights of postrepresentational cartography, I direct our attention to processual modes of understanding, the debated ontological propositions created by acts of mapping, the interactive engagements that contribute to the actualization of mapping as a means of organizing our epistemologies—and the provisional nature of any effort to map something as vast, as complex, as imagined as Global Asias and its diasporas.

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