Abdul Jan Mohamed in a seminal essay designated Edward Said as a “Specular Border Intellectual” whose positionality at a juncture of the world enabled him to transform his border-crossing into a significant cultural mission that brought under question the politics of imaginary identifications and oppositions. Said’s perspective in this formulation represents a transgressive border-crossing that reflects upon the existing gaps and dichotomies in a global configuration that is relationally interconnected. It is from this stance that Said advocates for a global perspective which emphasizes “overlapping geographies and intertwined histories”. Calling to mind this world view could perhaps provide an alternative framework of thinking and inquiry in our moment of global change. How can a view of the world based on the relationalities of geographies transgress the contemporary global flow of knowledge and cultural representations that is persistently based on a linearity that produces gaps and disconnections? How can a specular view of “borders” confront a configuration of “globality” that despite the momentous visibility of “shifting borders” continues to produce what Walter Mingnolo calls a “colonial globality”?

Using such questions as a methodological trajectory, this paper will draw on translation studies and politics of translation that involve, in Mingnolo’s words, “historical and geopolitical configurations” to address existing asymmetries of “shifting borders” that have yet to incorporate a multidirectional crossing of geographical borders of knowledge production and representation. Incorporating the perspective of a “specular border-crosser”, the paper will focus on the patterns, dynamics, hierarchies, and disconnects in the translation and circulation of cultural texts among and across the different geographies within MENA and the United States and Europe. This focus thereby points to the geographical gaps and dichotomies in transregional, transnational and translational configurations, while at the same time offering possibilities for new ways of scholarly and disciplinary thinking that incorporate a contrapuntal and multidirectional relationality of overlapping and shifting borders within and across the different “worldly” geographies.