Introduction:
The Cartographic Unconscious of Literary Studies

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... their geographers do not forget what entertainment the Irish of Tyrconnell gave to a map-maker about the end of the late rebellion; for one Berkeley being appointed [...] to draw a true and perfect map of the north parts of Ulster (the old maps being false and defective), when he came into Tyrconnell, the inhabitants took off his head, because they would not have their country discovered.

Sir John Davys, “Sir John Davys to Salisbury,” 1609

As elsewhere in the British Empire, the practice of cartography was pivotal in the Plantation of Ulster, the British colonization of this Irish province during the reign of King James I. Imperial mapmakers such as John Goghe, Robert Lythe, Francis Jobson, Richard Bartlett and John Norden had been hard at work from the middle of the sixteenth-century surveying and charting this “undiscovered” country as a prerequisite for the informed colonial administration of land, property, and population, as well as for the design of military strategies to deal with unruly Irish chieftains. Their hand-drawn parchment maps, beautiful, colourful, replete with fairytale monsters of the land and sea, made prominent, even magnified, features of the topography that were of strategic interest, including castles and forts, mountains, lakes, rivers, islands, forests, coasts, and harbors, and the names of dominant local chiefs and families. Perhaps the most famous and influential of such maps, Goghe’s “Hibernia” of 1567 (fig. 1), well demonstrates the strategic imperative behind its making.

Beyond serving the immediate needs of the imperium, these maps also helped lay the foundations for modern cartography. Shaping the concurrent rise of mapmaking as a profession, they began to institute the sorts of technical conventions, most importantly drawing to scale and faithfully representing their object’s dimensions, names, and physical features (although “north” was not necessarily in its “natural” position), characteristic of the modern map. Although maps had of course been employed as tools of (ideological as well as material) power in civilizations as ancient as those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and China, these incipient efforts to “capture,” in image form, Ireland as a political as well as a physical space might thus be considered paradigmatic of the imperial ambitions that have undergirded the evolution of cartography towards the form in which it now exists.

Initiatives ranging from the European mapping of North America between the fifteenth- and
eighteenth-centuries and Sir Mark Sykes’ infamous “line in the sand,” which, with a casual stroke of the finger in 1915, divided the Arab territories of the crumbling Ottoman Empire into British and French spheres of influence, to the development of satellite and GPS technologies as tools of contemporary warfare further demonstrate this foundational linkage between cartography, empire, and power.5

Yet mapmaking was often a highly dangerous enterprise. Apart from the risks associated with arduous journeys across seas and unfamiliar, wild terrains, where nature, unregulated, could itself threaten illness and other bodily harm, English mapmakers such as those in early modern Ireland also had to contend with violent local resistance to a practice all-too-transparent in its service to empire. The story of Richard Bartlett is particularly telling in this regard. While little is known of this talented English cartographer’s early life, it appears in J.H. Andrews’ definitive account that Bartlett arrived in Ireland circa 1600, and proceeded to draft between nineteen and twenty-seven exceptionally rich and detailed maps of the Ulster province. As with other maps of the period, these were designed primarily for military use, specifically in Charles Blount, Baron Mountjoy’s campaign to pacify Ulster (1600–3),

and they work hard to pinpoint the locations of castles, forts, and other sites of strategic interest. His masterpiece is considered to be “A Generalle Description of Ulster” (1602/3):


It is perhaps fitting, then, that when, circa 1603, Bartlett came to Tyrconnell (now more commonly referred to as County Donegal, and ironically enough depicted towards the left edge of Bartlett’s “Generalle Description,” above), its inhabitants should take off his head, and, with it, the intelligence behind English military strategy in the region. As later Attorney-General for Ireland Sir John Davys relates in a 1609 letter to the Secretary of State, the Earl of Salisbury (see epigraph above, where Davys refers to Bartlett as “Barkeley”), this incident occurred because the Irish “would not have their country discovered.” While the sense of “discovery” as “exploration” was certainly current at the time Davys composed his letter, his reversion to its more archaic, fourteenth-century usage as the act of “reconnoitering” or “surveying” a place or country is significant. This turn of phrase effectively demystifies our own typical understanding of cartography as a practice of disinterested exploration, inquiry, and knowledge-production, and exposes it as a representational technology (“cartotechnics,” if I may) both constituted in and constituting the network of forces, desires, and ambitions known as empire. Symbolized by Bartlett’s missing head,
the violence inherent to cartotechnics produces resistance, dissent, and it is precisely this antagonism, as embodied in the history of cartography, between imperial desires to capture, claim, possess, and map, and anti-imperial desires to remain unmapped that this special issue of English Language Notes seeks, at heart, to "discover."

"Cartographies of Dissent" builds on the previous issue of English Language Notes, "Imaginary Cartographies" (ELN 52.1, Spring/Summer 2014), edited by Karen Jacobs. It follows Jacobs in her understanding of the map as a form of "spatial writing," a "language of power," that symbolically mediates "between humans and their spatial environments." Further, it likewise pursues "a subaltern or alternative cartography [...] that eludes, interrupts, or disperses forms of power, or serves a spectrum of interests situated not 'from above' but 'from below.'" Yet while its contributions are certainly driven by a resounding critical fascination with the dialectics of cartography, power, and dissent as manifest across an array of contexts in literary and cultural history, this issue also cumulatively aims to interrogate literary studies itself for the spatial assumptions that have structured its theories, methodologies, and disciplinary formations. Its original critical remit might thus be defined as "the cartographic unconscious of literary studies," and its addresses such through sections on "Theoretical and Disciplinary Remappings," "Cultures of Cartography," "The Nation in the World / The World in the Nation," and "Resisting Imperial Cartographies." Dispersed across these sections, the essays collected in this issue engage critical paradigms such as nation and transnationalism, cultural materialism, postcolonialism, world literature, and digital humanities through their sharply focused readings of literary, cultural, and material practices of mapping and counter-mapping across, broadly speaking, global imperial modernity. Ranging from Elizabethan England and colonial America to the contemporary "age of insecurity," from the "transpacific West" and the "black Atlantic" to Ireland, Senegal, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and the unmapped countries of the imagination beyond, and from fiction, poetry, drama, life writing, and travel narratives to experimental film, conceptual art, tattoo art, and digital media, they demonstrate an exceptional breadth of subject matter throughout. Such breadth is matched by the illuminating diversity of their approaches to cartography—in these essays, mapping is read as a process in which literary and cultural texts participate, a cultural condition for the production of texts, a textual practice that in itself yields valuable hermeneutical insight, a cypher of the interwoven technological, geopolitical, and ideological imperatives of modernity, and so on. In sum, they suggest an alternative, or dissenting, remapping of literary studies precisely through their sustained attention to cartography as an object of literary critical inquiry, making for the seamless traversal of intentionality and reflexivity that "Cartographies of Dissent" attempts to articulate.

Among the essays collected in this issue, those of Djelal Kadir, William Arighi, and Karim Mattar in "Theoretical and Disciplinary Remappings" perhaps most directly attend to the spatial and cartographic underpinnings of literary studies. In his essay "Dissent and Digital Transumption in an Age of Insecurity," Kadir opens the issue with a timely and trenchant diagnostic critique of digital humanities and transnationalism as "institutional discourses," "ideologemes" that both reflect the technological, communicational, and
military mediations of global capital, and reproduce such within the patently instrument­
alized, dystopian space of the academy; in his words, “they simultaneously exist as pre­
vailing symptoms and function as ideological determinants that define and drive empire’s agenda.” Pertinent to the remainder of the issue, he then questions (and I would say exemplifies) the very possibility of dissent under conditions where capitalism, state structures, and intellectual labour are almost inextricably bound together. Kadir’s dedication of his essay to Professor Steven Salaita and the American Indian Studies Program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, a program that recently declared a vote of no-confidence in that university’s Chancellor Phyllis Wise, should be read as signal that, by his reckoning, the Salaita case illustrates the worldly reality of his essay’s diagnosis.

Partly in light of Kadir’s earlier work, Arighi and Mattar turn to what might be considered the “institutional discourse” of world literature in their essays. In “Empire and the Geography of Literary Time in the Spanish Philippines,” Arighi seeks to recode this discourse as a temporal as well as a spatial one. Through his analysis of nineteenth-century Spanish imperial representations of the Philippines (especially those of the prominent man-of-letters W.E. Retana), which produce the “metropolitan” as “modern” and the “peripheral” as “backwards,” Arighi argues that the quality of literarity “contains within it a division of the globe as a geographical idea into temporalities of literary development.” He thus contests theories of world literature that “assume a geographic world of nations and ethnic identities” (Damrosch, Casanova, Shih, Dimock, etc.), and, taking a cue from Pheng Cheah and Jacques Derrida, refocuses the debate on the ontology of “the literary” itself. In “The Shabah of World Literature: Bedouin Cartographies in Abdulrahman Munif’s Cities of Salt,” Mattar deploys “spectrality” just as Arighi deploys “literarity.” Through his reading of Cities of Salt (1984), Munif’s epic of Gulf petro-modernity, Mattar argues that the world literary system assimilates its “oral other” through novelization in much the same way as the world economic system incorporates its “nomadic other” through modernization. He continues that Munif deconstructs this system through his “spectral characterization of Bedouin resistance leader Miteb al-Hathal,” a character thus rendered inassimilable within the metaphysical as well as political space of the modern oil state. Negotiating the work of Franco Moretti and Neil Lazarus, he concludes by suggesting the exigency of a “spectral theory of world literature.”

As is perhaps apt for a section that focalizes its cultural materialist analyses around the question of mapping, “Cultures of Cartography” opens by recalling the origins of this mode of literary criticism in Renaissance studies, and adduces a crucial new context for it along the way. In “Mapping Uncertainty: Marine Cartography, the Wright-Molyneaux Map, and Twelfth Night,” Steve Mentz explores the “intersection” and “interfacing” of literary and maritime cultures in Elizabethan England. With reference to Edward Wright’s “Chart of the World on Mercator’s Projection” (1600), he suggests that maps, “machines for creating order,” are also “systems designed to accommodate and redress error.” He then turns to Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night (1601–2), arguing that the playwright’s oblique allusions to the Wright-Molyneaux map vis-à-vis Malvolio’s face inscribe “errancy” as as much a feature of the human condition—indeed, of the world of romantic comedy per se—as it is of fledgling
attempts to map the globe. Shaped by early modern cartographic culture, Shakespeare's dramaturgical navigations of the human thus also, he concludes, stage this culture's strategies for managing error and disorder, both emerging as practices of what he calls "mapping uncertainty." In "Cartography, the Body, and John Ledyard's Somography," Wes Atkinson attends to the material culture of eighteenth-century colonial America. He discusses the Jeffersonian land-grid as an "a priori geography" that, preceding the body's encounter with the physical landscape, constitutes a form of "abstract violence" that contributed to the dispossession of indigenous Native American communities. He then posits what he calls the American explorer and adventurer John Ledyard's "somography" as an alternative. Drawing on a range of spatial theorists (Lefebvre, Sparke, etc.) and theorists of the body (Scarry, Deleuze and Guattari, Manning, etc.), he argues that Ledyard's appropriation of the Polynesian practice of *tatau* (tattoo) to indelibly inscribe the map of his global circumambulations on his body comprises a radical "expression of encounter" with the landscape, one with important ethical and semiotic consequences for our own understanding of a cartography of dissent. In this essay, mapping becomes a form of bodily writing that sutures the human / spatiality divide inherent not only to colonial American cartography, but also to imperial cartotechnics throughout modernity. In "Atlantic Architectures: Nineteenth-Century Cartography and Martin Delany's Blake," Judith Madara jumps ahead to United States cartographic culture in the immediate antebellum era. Reading them as textual forms that corroborate and stage US imperial interests in the Caribbean, she argues that official, congressionally-approved maps of the 1850s such as those of J.H. Colton, D.G. Johnson, and A.J. Johnson reproduced, and circulated, national space as "hemispheric." She then turns to the anti-imperialist black author Martin Delany, whose various writings (especially his epic novel *Blake* [1859-62]), she shows, were deeply invested in the popular cartographic imaginary, and manipulated or revised its expansionist logic to envision a new abolitionism founded on what she calls "black hemispheric connectivity." Indeed, in its widest arc this essay demonstrates just how engrained questions of space and geography were in mid-nineteenth-century US material cultures of nation, region, race, and dissent, a lesson with important repercussions throughout the field of American studies, and beyond.

The essays of the next section, "The Nation in the World / The World in the Nation," all variously address, complicate, or intervene in the national literatures paradigm still to some extent relevant in literary studies by exposing the transnational aesthetic and thematic mediations of texts usually read within national frames. In "'I don't mind at all': The Case of Bartleby in Ireland," Adam Bargoff examines the transatlantic adaptation and appropriation of what he calls "the Bartleby meme" in twentieth-century Irish literary contexts. Focusing on short stories by James Joyce and especially John McGahern, he argues that the "paradox" of Bartleby's passive resistance assumes new significance in these works, where it is redeployed to suggest forms of passivity, resentment, and social acquiescence particular to the Irish male in his institutional settings. Thus tracing an "aesthetic continuum" (with a difference) between Melville, Joyce, and McGahern through the circulation of the short story genre, he concludes by demonstrating a new "transnational conscience" of dissent therein—a fitting close given that Bartleby is "the literary figure par excellence that
eludes the circuits of globalization." In "The Wild Transpacific West and Carlos Bulosan's America is in the Heart," Chase Smith pivots the oceanic imaginary westward to explore the American West as what he calls a "transpacific borderland." Defined as a site where "the racial, ethnic, gendered and class norms of national membership are tested, scrutinized, surveyed and circumvented," this notion of "borderland" thus also contests "East-West narratives of US nation building," and repositions the periphery as in fact central to an emergent network of Asia-America interactions in the early twentieth century. He explores these issues through Carlos Bulosan's America is in the Heart (1946), an autobiographical novel in which, in his reading, Filipino immigrant labour in 1930s-40s California is shown as "constitutive of rather than corrosive to regional modernization." In "Mapping Relationality: Adichie and the Social Spaces of Post-Independence Nigeria," Laurie Edson demonstrates that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie brings her keen diasporic and transnational sensibility to bear on her novel of the 1967-70 Biafran War in Nigeria, Half of a Yellow Sun (2006). Drawing on theorists of transnationalism (Spivak, Mignolo, Lionnet and Shih, Appiah, Maalouf, etc.), she argues that this novel contains "an implicit critique of an imperial cartographic impulse associated with globalization," and that Adichie's emphasis on the "lived realities" and "material lives" of those affected by the war constitutes "a remapping of the social spaces of post-Independence Nigeria." Such remapping, she concludes, performs an ethics of "relationality" that, based on non-hierarchical or horizontal social relations, subverts the impositions of both the nation and the globe.

In the final section, "Resisting Imperial Cartographies," Sarah D'Adamo, Cullen Goldblatt, and Cóilín Parsons most immediately and explicitly address the theme of cartographic dissent running throughout this issue. Despite the centrality of geography in postcolonial studies since at least Edward Said's Orientalism (1978), surprisingly little sustained attention has been paid in the field to either the imperial history of cartography as a discipline or to literary and cultural representations of maps. These essays thus engage the postcolonial just as the preceding essays engage literary critical discourses of nation, transnationalism, cultural materialism, world literature, and digital humanities, expanding and enriching its remit in novel ways.

In "A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder: Reading Cartographic Reflexivity," D'Adamo seeks to relocate "the problem of the world" in world literature to what she calls "the nineteenth-century colonial backwater of popular Canadian fiction." Focusing on James de Mille's under-acknowledged A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder (1888), she argues that this novel stages the orientalist encounter with the "other" (text, culture, place) via its satire on contemporaneous popular genres such as science fiction, popular romance, fantastic adventure, and ethnographic travel narrative. Such engagement with the conventions of colonial textuality, she continues, models a form of "anticolonial critique"—it confronts the reader with the biases and assumptions inherent to his/her habituated reading practices, and thus encourages dissent. Comprised of a critical counter-mapping of discursively constructed space, she provocatively calls this new postcolonial modality "cartographic reflexivity." In "Towards the Space between Words and Things:
Omar Blondin Diop (Died in Detention),” Goldblatt redirects the question of reflexivity back to the postcolonial critic. Here, he provides a redolent account of the young Senegalese revolutionary Omar Blondin Diop, one which beautifully melds the genres of life writing and critical prose. He opens his narrative in Gorée, the French fort-turned-prison-turned-historical museum in which Diop was held, and where Goldblatt attended the 2013 commemoration of the revolutionary’s death. From here, he embarks on a series of reflections on political memorialization, sites of memory, and complicity and resistance with reference to Senegal’s long colonial and postcolonial history. Reading, and reading himself reading, a series of texts featuring Gorée and Diop (namely, Gorée: Guide Touristique [1966], Jean-Luc Godard’s film La Chinoise [1967], and Momar Samb’s Wolof poem “Deguleen Mbokk Yi” [n.a.]), he finds himself implicitly participating in exactly the project of national memory he had originally set out to assess from an impassioned, but critical distance. Thus, through this nuanced method of reflexive analysis, he traces how the postcolonial object is mediated by the positionality of the critic, a double bind seen to structure dissent-as-praxis. Finally, in “Mapping the Globe: Gulam Mohammed Sheikh’s Postcolonial mappae mundi,” Parsons rounds off the issue with an open-ended invitation, one which I hope our readers will take with them as they finish, to reimagine the map as a properly postcolonial form. He explores the “afterlives” of the Ebstorffkarte, a (now destroyed) thirteenth-century map of the world designed around a religious iconography, in the hands of contemporary Gujarati artist Gulam Mohammed Sheikh. Sheikh’s The Mappa Mundi Suite (2003–4), he argues, draws on the polysemous, encyclopedic qualities of the medieval map in order to figure a postcolonial world of multiple, overlapping subjects and styles, which of course represent a diversity of interacting global actors. Thus rereading rather than strictly opposing the colonial archive, Sheikh’s maps, he concludes, chart a cartography of “surprising assent,” and stake out “a space for pluralism in a world of ethnic violence.”

Taken individually, the essays collected here each exemplifies a unique and original literary critical practice attentive to the multiple implications of cartography for our discipline. Taken together, as parts of an interrelated whole, they augur a remapping of literary studies precisely through their reflexive attention to the map as materiality, metaphor, and representational object. Let’s hope, granting Kadir’s timely diagnosis, that dissent nevertheless remains as viable here as it does in many of the literary and cultural texts to which we will now be exposed.

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NOTES

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3 For the most detailed account of English cartography in Ireland during the early colonial period, see William Smyth, Map-making, Landscapes and Memory: A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland c. 1530–1750 (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2007).


5 For excellent accounts of the role of cartography in the European colonization of North America, see John Rennie Short, Cartographic Encounters: Indigenous Peoples and the Exploration of the New World (London: Reaktion Books, 2009) and Martin Brückner, ed., Early American Cartographies (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011). For detailed accounts of the imperial remapping of the Middle East, including the consequences of such for the region today, see Karen Culcasi, Cartographic Constructions of the Middle East (UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2011) and James Barr, A Line in the Sand: The Anglo-French Struggle for the Middle East, 1914–1948 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013). For wide-ranging critical discussions of the relationship between cartography, technology, and contemporary war, see Derek Gregory and Allan Pred, eds., Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence (London: Routledge, 2006). As can be seen in the official Sykes-Picot Agreement Map (see p. 10), the 1916 Agreement between the two imperial powers to allocate the territories of Palestine, Jordan, and Southern Iraq to British control (Area “B”) and Lebanon, Syria, and Northern Iraq to French control (Area “A”) should the Ottoman Empire be defeated during the First World War was in fact loosely based on Sykes’ declaration that “I should like to draw a line from the e in Acre to the last k in Kirkuk” in a meeting with the Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, and his war cabinet on 16 December 1915. Barr, A Line in the Sand, 12. It is barely an exaggeration to say that this single sublime gesture of cartographic arrogance has shaped the entire history of the Levant, its politics, economics, society, culture, and endless wars and catastrophes, to the present day.


9 Ibid., 2.
See especially Djelal Kadir, "To World, To Globalize—Comparative Literature’s Crossroads,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 41, no. 1 (2004). In this essay, Kadir argues that the transitive practice of “worlding” implicit to the discourse of world literature is equivalent to “imperial moves that circumscribe the world into manageable global boundedness.” Kadir, “To World, To Globalize,” 7.