

INTRODUCTION

The Deterritorialization of American Literature

The theme of this book is the relationship between American literature and global space and how this equation has fluctuated and evolved over time. My concern will be not only with works of fiction or poetry that are organized explicitly around particular conceptions of place but also with how a wide range of texts are informed implicitly by other kinds of geographical projection, of the type found in cartography and other forms of mapping. My thesis will be that the interrelation between American literature and geography, far from being something that can be taken as natural, involves contested terrain, terrain that has been subject over the past four centuries to many different kinds of mutation and controversy. I will argue that these instabilities have too frequently been overlooked in the ways the subject of American literature has been codified and institutionalized, especially over the past hundred years. Cultural geographer David Harvey has written about the desirability of reconstructing a matrix of “historical-geographical materialism” within which social formations of all kinds might be analyzed (*Condition* 359), and to reconsider American literature specifically in the context of geographical materialism is to think through the variegated forms of its imaginary relations to the real dimensions of physical space. Concomitantly, I will suggest that the association of America, and by extension the subject of American literature, with the current geographical boundaries of the United States is a formulation that should be seen as confined to a relatively limited and specific time in history, roughly the period between the end of the American Civil War in 1865 and the presidency of Jimmy Carter, which ended in 1981. During the colonial period and the early years of the republic, the country’s more amorphous territorial framework engendered parallel uncertainties about the status and authority of American discourse; similarly, since about 1981, the multidimensional effects of globalization have reconfigured the premises of U.S. national identity in relation to a wider sphere. The identification of American literature with U.S. national territory was an equation confined to the national period and not something that was equally prevalent either before or afterward. I am not, therefore, attempting simply to describe American literature as a global phenomenon, as if the subject could imperially claim the whole world as its rightful sphere; more modestly, I am seeking to trace historical

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variables in the uneven ways American literature has imaginatively mapped itself in relation to a global domain over the past three hundred years.

My critical method involves the use of spatial and temporal coordinates that are themselves, of course, metaphorical constructions. While it is important to acknowledge how any boundary that historians or geographers draw, in time or space, must inevitably be arbitrary in some way, it is also important not to lose sight of the valuable cultural work that such a perspectival process of remapping can perform. As Fredric Jameson observed in his classic essay “Periodizing the 60s,” the value of this kind of historicization lies in the way it can bring to light structural analogies between apparently disparate events within particular eras. Such an orientation has the beneficial effect of moving narratives of the past away from both anecdotal self-indulgence and merely sentimental forms of nostalgia; instead, there is, in Jameson’s words, a contrary insistence that “[h]istory is necessity,” that the past “had to happen the way it did, and that its opportunities and failures were inextricably intertwined, marked by the objective constraints and openings of a determinate historical situation” (178). Arjun Appadurai has similarly described the identification of “isomorphic” correspondences between disparate points on a grid as a way of bringing into juxtaposition events that might in other circumstances have been considered entirely unrelated (*Modernity* 182), thereby elucidating significant correspondences that would otherwise have remained hidden. In *The Shaping of America*, his multivolume attempt to obtain “a geographical perspective on 500 years of history,” D. W. Meinig cuts the historical cake slightly differently, outlining an “Atlantic America, 1492–1800,” followed by “Continental America, 1800–1867,” “Transcontinental America, 1850–1915,” and finally “Global America, 1915–2000.” Like Meinig, I see the prerevolutionary period as “a vast, unplanned, uncontrolled, unstable” landscape (I, 205) and the nineteenth century as a time when the national territory was consolidated, although Meinig sees globalization as emerging in embryonic form at the beginning of the twentieth century, whereas I argue for more of a disjunction between modernist and postmodernist periods. The crucial point, though, is not so much where any particular emphasis or hypothetical boundary might lie but the ways in which geographical consciousness enters subliminally into American cultural narratives, evoking tensions and crosscurrents that destabilize the reproduction of a self-authenticating literary subject.

My second theoretical caveat, following from the paradox of periodization, derives from Paul Ricoeur’s observation in *Time and Narrative* of how cultural historians have no choice other than to read time backward, as what Ricoeur calls “retrodiction” rather than prediction (I, 135). This method inevitably involves projecting from effect to cause,

rather than the other way around. This means not only that all history is narrative but also that we reorganize such narratives in the light of what Ricoeur calls a “redistribution of horizons” (III, 173), changing our view of the past in accordance with revised expectations about the present and the future. This in turn lends all historical remapping a reflexive dimension, since scholars necessarily find themselves imitating the formula that Edgar Allan Poe ascribed to the writing of detective stories and other fictional narratives, starting with the “dénouement” and then retracing forward what had already been traced backward.¹ This kind of structural double bind has manifested itself recently in the manifold attempts to change the genealogy of American literary history, to revise beginnings rather than ends. Cyrus Patell has written of how readings of contemporary American ethnic authors typically run alongside a revisionist critique of the literary canon, so that “US culture’s reception of previous texts by minority authors influences the production and reception of future texts from emergent literary cultures” (“Representing” 64). As an example of this teleological *mise-en-abîme*, he has described the Dutch ethnic legacies embedded in cosmopolitan New York as more of a corollary to multicultural, twenty-first-century America than the time-honored Puritan origins of New England (“New Capital”). The pattern that we impose upon the past, in other words, is necessarily intertwined and enmeshed with concerns of the present.

This recognition of the inevitably perspectival slant of institutional narratives can, therefore, serve beneficially to demystify the established canonical framework of American literary studies. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly apparent that twentieth-century narratives of American cultural history, framed as they were by assumptions about the country’s national destiny, became accustomed to looking out for phenomena that seemed to anticipate the national power of the United States, power that had been consolidated in hegemonic terms only relatively recently. The very category of the “early republic” is itself, of course, an anachronistic term, implying there was a later republic into which these anterior events naturally led. This is why, for example, the Puritan poet Edward Taylor was often celebrated in the last century as a harbinger of the tortuous romantic spirit of Emily Dickinson, in the same way that Anne Bradstreet was hailed as an honorary ancestor by post-1945 writers such as John Berryman, who prized her confessional aspects, and Adrienne Rich, who emphasized her sturdy spirit of feminist independence.² All these misprisions involve a creative and interesting

¹ For an exposition of this theory, see Poe’s essay “The Philosophy of Composition” 13.

² The most systematic critique of this retroactive critical teleology has come from studies by Spengemann.

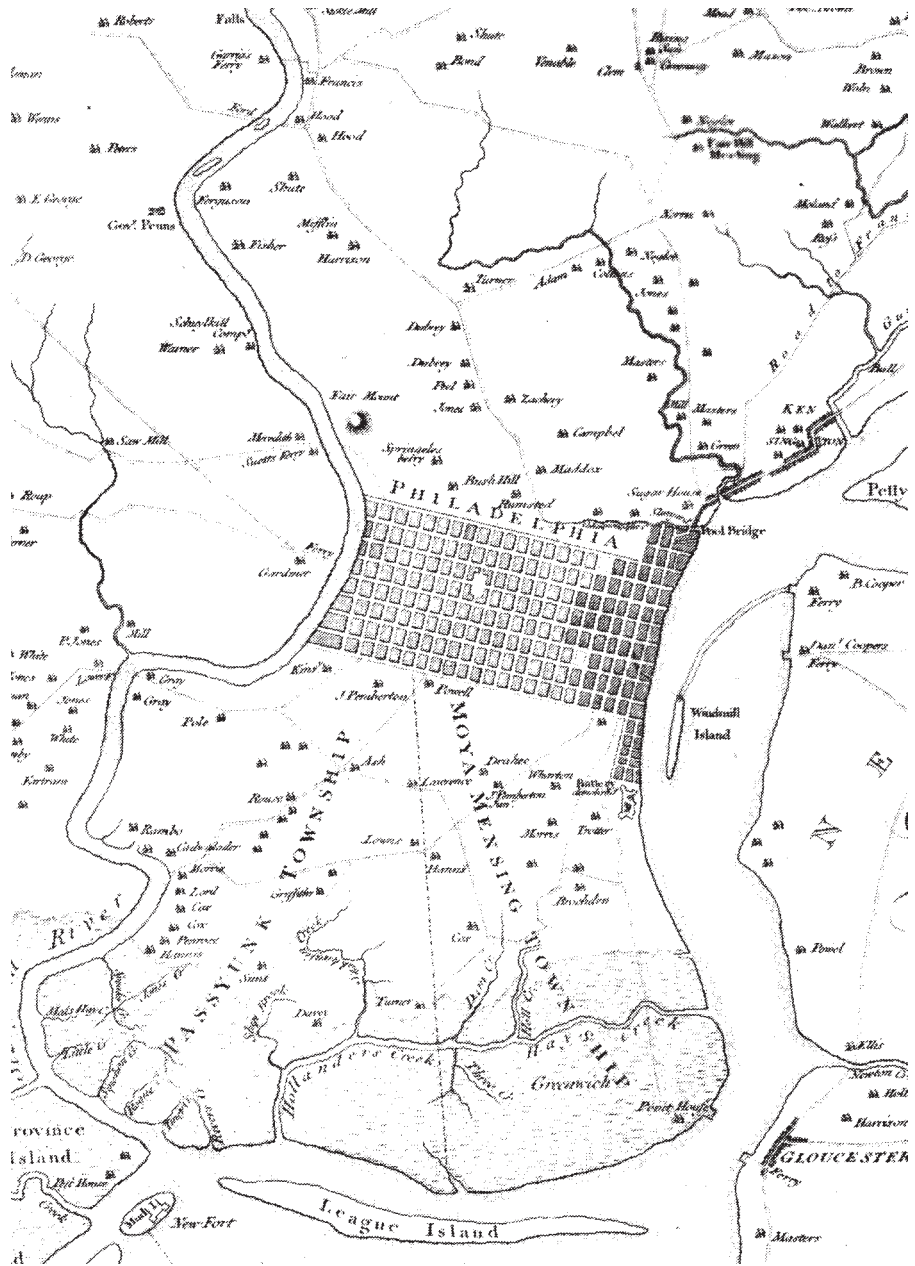


Figure 1. Detail from Matthew Lotter, "A Plan and Environs of Philadelphia" (1777).

use of the past, but in a historical sense they are manifestly misleading, since they tend to gloss over Taylor's Calvinist silences and Bradstreet's courtly, Renaissance conservatism in the interests of aligning them with a national narrative that is projected backward so as to validate American national culture of a later time.

There is, however, little to suggest such a sense of national triumphalism appeared a *fait accompli* to American themselves in the first half of the nineteenth century, when their structures of governance and tentative moves toward political cohesion were based on what many at the time considered to be the dubious theoretical hypothesis of federal union. In the first sixty years of U.S. history, in the aftermath of the colonial period, the country's sense of national identity was as uncertain, as provisional, as its cartography. The map of Philadelphia drawn in 1777 by German cartographer Matthew Lotter (figure 1) symptomatically illustrates the gaping discrepancy between a tiny rational grid at the heart of the city center and the sprawling, amorphous terrain in the unmapped, unregulated countryside of surrounding Pennsylvania (Boelhower 495). The western part of the present-day United States was even more inchoate: to look at a historical map of Latin America in 1830 (figure 2) is to see the territories of Mexico extending up through present-day California, Arizona, and New Mexico, with the shape of the nation itself appearing very different from the "sea to shining sea" model with which we are familiar today.³ The point here, quite simply, is that when Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in his 1844 essay "The Poet" about America being a "poem in our eyes" (22), it was precisely that: a hypothetical or imaginative conception or at least one that had not yet achieved any firm sense of territorial grounding or enclosure. Walt Whitman's nationalistic poetry in the 1850s similarly encompasses a tentative, optative dimension, something that is frequently overlooked because of the blustering and hortatory tone of his verse. Anne Baker has described how the structural anxieties attendant upon annexing "vast tracts of uncharted territory" (1) in the nineteenth century played themselves out in obsessions among American writers about "a fear of boundlessness and a need to impose form on space" (27), something apparent in Henry David Thoreau's punctilious surveys of the natural world, as well as Herman Melville's more parodic engagement with "parallels and meridians," which *Mardi* describes as "imaginary lines drawn round the earth's surface" (9–10). All the political investments in notions of Manifest Destiny in the 1840s and 1850s, the drive to expand westward and to claim the land in the name of the

³ On the instability of U.S. nationalism in the West in the early nineteenth century, see Waldstreicher.



Figure 2. “Latin America in 1830,” from Patrick Imbert and Marie Couillard, *Les Discours du Nouveau Monde au XIXe siècle au Canada français et en Amérique latine* (1995). Shelfmark: CO4 R1179. Map from back cover. Reproduced with permission by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Stars and Stripes, speak to a desire to, as it were, fill in the blank spaces on the map, to subjugate the continent in a cartographic as well as a military sense. Indeed, the frequent U.S. wars in the early nineteenth century—with the British in 1812 culminating in the Battle of New Orleans, with the Mexicans in the 1840s over Texas and the southwest territories, and with Native Americans over the question of Indian removal—all speak to an impulse to redescribe the map of the nation. This is one reason maps themselves were so popular in America at this time, as Martin Brückner has shown (140–41), and why geography came to be considered a basic, compulsory subject in American schools, occupying a more prestigious place on the curriculum than history; the textbook *Geography Made Easy*, produced by the “father of American geography” Jedediah Morse in 1784, had gone through twenty-two editions by 1820, and during this antebellum era geographical writing was considered, in Bruce A. Harvey’s words, a “patriotic genre” (28). The reciting of place names became as familiar in American educational contexts at this time as the learning by rote of spelling or multiplication tables in other countries, and it testified to the pioneering attempt imaginatively to appropriate what was, of course, a dauntingly large and unsettled continent.

To talk of the territorializing impulse of early nineteenth-century American culture, then, is to suggest that its way of identifying itself as something different did not necessarily involve simply a mimetic reflection of locality. The writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson have traditionally been thought of as a source for the national identity of American literature because of his principled emphasis on what he calls in “Nature” (1836) an “original relation to the universe” (7). But there is, in fact, very little description of the natural world in this or any other part of Emerson’s writing, and the way he marks his originality is not through mimesis but through intertextuality, through taking icons and ideas from classical European culture and spinning them round in a new way. The exuberantly weightless quality of Emerson’s prose thus derives from the way he remaps nineteenth-century American culture in relation to the classical monuments of the past. Just as Handel’s biblical oratorios of a hundred years earlier rehouse epic mythologies of the past within a radically disjunct neoclassical environment, a form of what Ronald Paulson calls “sacred parody” (*Hogarth’s* 214) that flaunts ebulliently the gap between past and present, so Emerson presents himself in a deliberately belated fashion as the intellectual heir of Plato and Montaigne, someone whose project involves the vertiginous transformation of one culture into another. In academic terms, it is unfortunate that Emerson has been designated by the twentieth-century critical tradition of American romanticism most closely associated with Harold Bloom as the institutional progenitor of American literature—the ultimate source of tran-

scendentalism, pragmatism, William James, Wallace Stevens, and so on—without an equivalent emphasis on what Emerson describes in his essay “Experience” (1844) as the inherently intertextual quality of perception: “Life is a train of moods like a string of beads,” he writes, “and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus” (30). “Experience,” with its “focus” on what Emerson calls the attainment of a soul’s “due sphericity” (46), exemplifies ways in which, for inhabitants of the United States in the 1840s, their home would have appeared to be positioned in a paradoxical situation somewhere between the empirical and the abstract, between place and placelessness. It is one of the burdens of Emerson’s writing that location itself is always relative and arbitrary, that Goethe is his neighbor as much as the man in the next street, that, as he remarks in “The Poet,” banks and tariffs are “dull to dull people” but in fact rest on “the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy, and the temple of Delphi” (21–22). To read Emerson in intertextual terms, in other words, is to deterritorialize him, to extract him from the limiting circumference of antebellum New England and to think about ways in which he attempts deliberately to reconceptualize Enlightenment universalism within an alternative New World environment.

In the 1850s, geography itself increasingly became part of the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny in the United States. The American Geographic Society was established in 1851, three years before Arnold Guyot, the most influential American geographer of his era, took up the chair at Princeton he was to occupy for the next thirty years. Emerson himself owned the 1851 edition of Guyot’s *The Earth and Man*, in which the author’s project was to develop a theory of hemispheric evolution as providential and thus as entirely consonant with the exceptionalist qualities of U.S. national identity. The “vital principle” (17) of geography, asserted Guyot, was the “*mutual exchange of relations*” (19) between “inorganic nature” and “organised beings” (17), so that the physical world should not be seen merely as an inert or inanimate object, but as a phenomenon “organised for the development of man” (293–94). According to “the decrees of Providence” (28), he claimed, “nature and history, the earth and man, stand in the closest relations to each other, and form only one grand harmony” (29). Guyot’s conception of hemispheric symmetry was of a piece with his narrative of westward historical progression, the notion that the center of civilization, which had originated in Asia, was now passing from Europe to North America. Guyot further verified the cultural superiority of North to South America by presenting this hemispheric antithesis as analogous to that which appertained in Europe: “The contrast between the North and South, mitigated in the temperate regions of the mother country, is reproduced in the New World, more strongly marked,

and on a grander scale, between North America, with its temperate climate, its Protestant and progressive people, and South America, with its tropical climate, its Catholic and stationary population” (284). It is not difficult to see why this version of geographical providence would have appealed especially to Emerson in the 1850s, after the war with Mexico, the annexation of Texas, the evacuation of the British from the Pacific Northwest, and the American incorporation of the Oregon Territory. In his journal for 1853, Emerson notes how “Columbus was the first to discover the equatorial current in the ocean” (XIII: 5), and in a later journal entry, he cites with approbation a passage from *The Earth and Man*, where Guyot declares it “beyond a doubt . . . that the waters of the ocean, move with the heavens; that is, in the direction of the apparent course of the sun and stars, from east to west” (XIII: 169).

What crucially changed the cultural and political landscape of the United States was, of course, the Civil War, which after its conclusion in 1865 consolidated the geography of the nation by ensuring it would henceforth be integrated into one political territory. It is not surprising that scholars, particularly in the United States, have kept returning compulsively to the Civil War as a turning point of national destiny because, despite all the internecine regional and racial conflicts it highlighted, the outcome of the war also facilitated the emergence of the United States as the world’s leading economic power in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was then that the country began to take the continental shape that we know today: California was admitted to the union in 1850; Oregon in 1859; Kansas in 1861; Nevada in 1864; Nebraska in 1867; Colorado in 1876; the Dakotas, Montana, and Washington in 1889; Idaho in 1890; and so on. The joining together of the North and the South, in other words, ran in parallel with the joining together of the East and the West; America was metamorphosed from a series of local economies into an imposing continental edifice. Given the simultaneous growth in communications and technology at this time, the expansion westward of the railways, the development of the telegraph, and so on, it becomes easy to see how the United States could understand itself as a coherent political and economic entity by the year 1900 in a way that simply had not been possible when Emerson wrote “Nature” in 1836.⁴

This incorporation of the United States as a culturally and politically unified entity was anticipated during the Civil War by Abraham Lincoln, who in his Gettysburg Address invoked a self-replicating, circular structure of representation—“government of the people, by the people, for the people”—as though the country were modeled around a myth of equali-

⁴ On the cultural and economic development of the United States in the late nineteenth century, see Trachtenberg, *Incorporation*.

tarian democracy, something that was certainly very far from the minds of the founding fathers eighty years earlier.⁵ Not coincidentally, it was around Lincoln's time that the United States began to take on the form of a singular noun, rather than the plural noun that had conventionally been used in the first half of the nineteenth century, with this shift from plural to singular exemplifying again the consolidation of the nation into a state of indivisible unity. It was also around the turn of the twentieth century that the notion of the land as bearing inherent national values came to be invested with a sacred aura. Florida and New Orleans, for instance, were bartered and traded quite happily in the early nineteenth century, but, as Benedict Anderson has observed, after the Civil War the idea of the United States as a national space became mystified in such a way that no politician would have dared thenceforth to think of paying off the national debt by, say, simply selling off the Florida Keys or southern California to the highest bidder. In this sense, America's purchase of Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million in 1867 was the last major commercial transaction of its kind, although the United States also bought the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917 for \$25 million, a transaction motivated in part by security concerns during World War I.

Much of the critical language in this era of burgeoning U.S. nationalism tended to involve a justification of American difference, of the particular qualities of American scenes and locations, such as we see in the novels of Theodore Dreiser, William Dean Howells, and others. This was also the era of the mythology surrounding Ellis Island, through which immigrants were to be socially assimilated and homogenized into American citizens. The high-water mark of immigration to the United States was 1.3 million in 1907, the year before Israel Zangwill produced his play *The Melting Pot*, which promulgated the myth of America as a land of immigrants even in critiquing its efficacy. This kind of double vision, simultaneously constructing and deconstructing an image of America as promised land, was characteristic of the way American modernism tended to be wrapped into a rhetoric of nativist utopia, a rhetoric that served as the foundational basis and underlying grid for all the subsequent vacillations and ironies that permeate its texts.⁶ Although Randolph Bourne's essay "Trans-National America," published in 1916, starts off in its first sentence by proclaiming "the failure of the melting pot" in the face of "diverse nationalistic feelings" (107) among the American immigrant population during World War I, the penultimate paragraph of Bourne's

⁵ For an analysis of how the nineteenth-century "democratic society was not the society the revolutionary leaders had wanted or expected," see G. Wood 365

⁶ On the complementary aspects of racial identity and textual irony in American modernist narratives such as *The Great Gatsby*, see Michaels, *Our America* 41–42.

essay looks forward prophetically to a new version of the United States predicated on a greater tolerance of ethnic diversity, what Bourne calls “a future America, on which all can unite, which pulls us irresistibly toward it, as we understand each other more warmly” (123).

Thus, American literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century tends not only to be saturated in locality but also to understand that locality as a guarantee of its own authenticity and its patriotic allegiance, something articulated most explicitly by the polemical essays of Howells in defense of the methods of realism. This is the realm of what Philip Fisher has called “hard facts,” where the relationship between the local and the national becomes self-allegorizing, in the sense that the value of particular places—Willa Cather’s Nebraska or Robert Frost’s New England or William Carlos Williams’s New Jersey—are validated not by their specific local characteristics or phenomenological qualities but from their synecdochic embodiment of a national impulse, their sense of being, as Williams put it, “in the American grain.” Tom Lutz’s work on literary cosmopolitanism has emphasized the extent to which regional writing in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America was mediated by an external perspective that sought to integrate region and nation as the geographical corollaries of each other, as patriotic manifestations of what Howells called “our decentralized literature” (Lutz 38). John Dewey’s 1920 essay “Americanism and Localism” paradoxically declared “locality” to be “the only universal” aspect of American national identity (15), while Carrie Tirado Bramen, in *The Uses of Variety*, has described how an emphasis on diversity, both ethnic and regional, became an “inviolable sign of national exceptionalism” for twentieth-century American culture (1). Tracing this discourse of material and spatial abundance back to William James’s writings on pluralism in 1909, Bramen shows how, far from opposing identitarian politics, James became the precursor of latter-day theorists such as Cornel West who, even as late as the 1990s, imagined a commitment to multiculturalism to be emblematic of the way in which an open U.S. culture might differentiate itself from the more repressive, restrictive systems of other countries (Bramen 297).

This move to integrate and reconcile local variation within a larger national matrix was perpetuated in the early twentieth century through the rationalized industrial methods perfected by Henry Ford and others, which were based around a factory system where the national model was reproduced in every state of the union. The defining issue in John Dos Passos’s novel *USA*, published as a trilogy in 1938, is how by this time national similarities have become more important than regional differences, how an industrial model of mass production and consumption has worked its way into every corner of the United States. (The title of *USA*’s first volume, *The 42nd Parallel*, is taken pointedly from the geographical

line of latitude that extends east to west across the U.S.) All this generated tremendous political cohesion and economic wealth for the country in the middle part of the twentieth century, enabling it to intervene decisively in World War II and to establish itself iconically, particularly in Europe, as an emblematic land of the free, a cold war alternative to both the brutality of Fascism and the poverty of Communism. It was in the aftermath of World War II that the American Studies Association was founded in the United States, in 1951, and most of the American studies programs in Europe also originated around this time. All these programs traded off the idea of America as an exemplary and exceptional nation, a beacon of both material regeneration, through its laissez-faire economic system, and of cultural modernity. Such modernity was thought to emerge through a stylistic emphasis on colloquial informality, typified in the 1950s by jazz and other forms of popular culture, as well as in the incisive vernacular of Saul Bellow and the Beat writers, all of which seemed to imply a welcome escape from the ossified class structures and social hierarchies of Europe. In a *Time* cover story of 1941, Henry Luce, the magazine's editor-in-chief, famously described the twentieth century as "the American century." As Neil Smith has observed, such a prophecy on Luce's part necessarily involved an assumption of "geographical amnesia" (460), a putative triumph over the coordinates of physical space, the replacement of an imperial design based on territorial possession by one driven instead by a liberal internationalism, through which American economic and cultural ideas would penetrate overseas markets. As in the American studies model, U.S. national identity became associated with the export of goods across national borders, with the aim ultimately of consolidating the exceptionalist aspects of nationalist iconography.

What I want to suggest, though, is that the United States has now moved in significant ways beyond this national phase and that since the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as president in January 1981 the country has entered what we might call a transnational era, one more centered around the necessarily reciprocal position of the U.S. within global networks of exchange. To give greater historical specificity to this matrix of transnationalism, we can look back to the idea of deterritorialization first broached in 1972 by French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their psychoanalytical work *Anti-Oedipus*, to describe how flows of desire traverse the boundaries of distinct, separate territories:

The decoding of flows and the deterritorialization of the socius thus constitutes the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism. It continually draws near to its limit, which is a genuinely schizophrenic limit. . . . [C]apitalism, through its process of production,

produces an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge, against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear. (34)

Far from seeing in the State the principle of a territorialization that would inscribe people according to their residence, we should see in the principle of residence the effect of a movement of deterritorialization that divides the earth as an object and subjects men to the new imperial inscription, to the new full body, to the new *socius*. (195)

The State can no longer be content to overcode territorial elements that are already coded, it must invent specific codes for flows that are increasingly deterritorialized. (218)

This term *deterritorialization* has subsequently been used in a broader cultural and political context by critics such as Caren Kaplan, who has related it to the experience of women and ethnic minorities in “becoming minor” or living on the edge (“Deterritorializations” 359), and by Appadurai, who has discussed it more specifically in relation to the processes of globalization:

[M]y approach to the break caused by the joint force of electronic mediation and mass migration is explicitly transnational—even postnational. . . . [I]t moves away dramatically from the architecture of classical modernization theory, which one might call fundamentally realist insofar as it assumes the salience, both methodological and ethical, of the nation-state. . . . Until recently . . . imagination and fantasy were antidotes to the finitude of social experience. In the past two decades, as the *deterritorialization* of persons, images, and ideas has taken on a new force, this weight has imperceptibly shifted. (*Modernity* 9, 53; my italics)

Speaking in 2004, a senior diplomatic figure from the U.S. Embassy in London expressed the view that the crucial political shift within his own professional lifetime was not the election in 2000 of George W. Bush rather than Al Gore to succeed Bill Clinton, but the country’s decisive move in 1980 from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. Of course, as noted earlier, all such imaginary divisions in history are arbitrary and approximate, but this dividing line might have some plausibility because, during the 1970s and 1980s, the economic infrastructure of the United States began to change significantly. Richard Nixon anticipated this shift toward a global economy in August 1971 when he announced that the United States would no longer redeem currency for gold, thereby effectively abandoning the gold standard and ushering in an era of fluctuating exchange rates. David Harvey dates the decline of “the Fordist regime” from 1973, the same year that money became

“de-materialized,” as a fully floating system of currency conversion was adopted so that money no longer had “a formal or tangible link to precious metals” (*Condition* 140, 297). With the loss of the mechanism that effectively regulated the growth rate of the country’s money supply, the United States, like other nation-states, found itself increasingly drawn into the marketplace of global exchange, something given greater momentum in the 1980s by the free-market philosophies of President Reagan, and in the 1990s by the dramatic growth in information technology that made it increasingly possible to transfer capital around the globe at a moment’s notice. These developments were replicated slightly later in other parts of the world: in Britain, for instance, the election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in 1979 brought to an abrupt end the postwar years of liberal social consensus in that country, but the key symbolic event in Europe was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which not only effectively ended the cold war but also fatally undermined the social and economic cohesion of what had been postwar Europe’s most successful corporate state, West Germany. Michael Denning sees the fall of the Berlin Wall as heralding the crucial break between what he calls the age of three worlds, demarcated according to the discrete geopolitical zones that dominated area studies in the cold war period, between 1945 and 1989, and the subsequent era of globalization. Denning makes the point that pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the transfer of finance capital across national borders crucially destabilized at this time the autonomy of inward-looking political regimes of all kinds, “Manley’s social-democratic Jamaica as well as de Klerk’s apartheid South Africa” (*Culture* 46).

It is important to emphasize how these forces of deterritorialization have also operated insidiously to disturb and dislocate the national identity of the United States itself, in particular the relationship between its domestic space and the wider world. In *Empire*, produced not coincidentally at the height of the neoliberal economic boom in 1999, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri described international capitalism as “a *de-centered* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers” (xii), and they suggested this was a “new imperial form of sovereignty” (xiii), one not to be identified with any particular “nation-state” (xiv). But such a version of imperialism would appear to be oddly reminiscent of a disembodied transcendentalism, wherein finance capital, rather than Emerson’s transparent eyeball, has become the force field whose center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere: “Empire presents a superficial world,” write Hardt and Negri, “the virtual center of which can be accessed immediately from any point across the surface” (58). By seeking simply to supersede spatial geography, Hardt and Negri implicitly mimic

the rhetoric of empire in the way they render territorial formations obsolete, so that, as Neil Smith puts it, their “recognition of empire remains clouded by the lost geography ideologies that should be its target” (457).

Within a world of geographical materialism, however, the actual experience of deterritorialization manifests itself as more jagged and fractious, bound up with tensions and inconsistencies that cannot be comfortably subsumed within global systems or regimes of capital accumulation. One fictional representation of this fraught state can be found in the novel *Primary Colors* by Joe Klein, published as an anonymous account of Bill Clinton’s election campaign in 1992. The presidential candidate, called there “Jack Stanton,” addresses a group of workers in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and says he will not delude them into thinking he can protect their jobs for life in a new situation where transnational corporations can swiftly pull investment in and out of the country in a way that would never have occurred to Henry Ford sixty years earlier:

So let me tell you this: No politician can bring these shipyard jobs back. Or make your union strong again. No politician can make it be the way it used to be. Because we’re living in a new world now, a world without borders—economically, that is. Guy can push a button in New York and move a billion dollars to Tokyo before you blink an eye. We’ve got a world market now. And that’s good for some. In the end, you’ve gotta believe it’s good for America. . . . I’ll fight and worry and sweat and bleed to get the money to make education a lifetime thing in this country, to give you the support you need to move on up. But you’ve got to do the heavy lifting your own selves. I can’t do it for you, and I know it’s not gonna be easy. (161–62)

Stanton (or Clinton) deliberately positions himself here in relation to the flexible conditions of the global marketplace, the realm of outsourcing and transnationalization. He acknowledges that American corporate interests can often be served more easily by relocating service or production industries to Mexico or Asia, where wages are lower and costs are cheaper, rather than through domestic investment. This effectively means the stable patterns of middle-class prosperity and security that characterized the earlier Henry Ford era have all but evaporated. Corporate profits have, of course, increased rapidly; but their growth is not related directly to or shared by large sections of the working population, as tended to be the case in the mid-twentieth century, when corporations such as Ford usually took a benevolent, patriarchal interest in the long-term welfare of their employees.

The interaction between American culture and globalization is a vast topic interwoven with developments in telecommunications and media as well as the expansion of transnational corporations, and the main point

to be noted here is simply that it happened. For example, the hamburger chain McDonald's only opened its first two foreign outlets, in Canada and Puerto Rico, in 1967; but by 1999, overseas sales for McDonald's had actually overtaken domestic sales, and today a majority of its outlets, approximately 17,000 out of 30,000, are located outside the territorial boundaries of the United States (N. Ferguson 18). Indeed, the relationship between geographical location and cultural identity has changed so radically in the wake of recent changes in communications technologies that Linda Basch and others argue traditional distinctions between migrants and immigrants no longer hold good. They point, for example, to the Grenadian constituency in New York that remains socially, politically, and often economically part of its ancestral domain; of Grenada's official population of 90,000, in fact, only 30,000 of them actually live there, and this has led to a new construct of what Basch et al. call a "deterritorialized" nation-state, within which people can remain active electronically in their old countries. Such two-way relationships have increasingly been legally formalized: since the late 1980s, for example, the Philippine state has continued to collect income tax on all Filipino citizens residing abroad on a special overseas visa issued by the government. This has meant also that the U.S. Congress has found itself increasingly under direct pressure from Filipino voters in the United States to involve itself directly in Filipino domestic politics, with the consequence that the traditional distinctions between domestic and foreign have come to appear increasingly unclear. Nor should this Filipino example be seen as especially anomalous; in *The Transnational Villagers* (2001), Peggy Levitt offers a case study of how migrants from Miraflores, a town in the Dominican Republic, to Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood of Boston, participate simultaneously in the social, political, and economic lives of their homeland and their host society. The transnational village, in Levitt's sense, functions not through spatial proximity but through cheap telecommunications and airfares, and to conceive of a nation-state that stretches beyond its traditional geographical boundaries is also to imagine, by a reverse projection, an American state whose territory is no longer automatically synonymous with the interests of U.S. citizens.

This is neither to present neoliberalism or globalization as a simple *fait accompli* nor to suggest that local or national politics have no part to play in the organization and redistribution of resources. What it is to argue, in relation to the study of American literature and culture, is that since the 1980s, the rules of engagement have changed so significantly that old area-studies nostrums about exceptionalist forms of national politics and culture, pieties about American diversity or whatever, have become almost irrelevant. In terms of ways in which this move toward a transnational infrastructure has manifested itself in American literature,

some of the most illuminating instances occur in the works of writers such as Douglas Coupland and William Gibson—one brought up in Vancouver, Canada, but who writes about the Pacific Northwest as a transnational region; the other born in South Carolina, but resident in Vancouver since 1972—whose representations of American digital culture, as we shall see in chapter 6, are organized obliquely around parallel computer universes. There is an extended treatment of the theme of deterritorialization in Gibson's novel *Pattern Recognition* (2003), whose heroine works for a public-relations company called Blue Ant, described in the book as "more post-geographic than multinational" (6). As she shuttles across national boundaries, Gibson's heroine thinks back to her father, who for twenty-five years had been "an evaluator and improver of security for American embassies worldwide" and whose watchword had always been "secure the perimeter" (44). But the old cold warrior is lost in Manhattan on the morning of 9/11, with his wife subsequently suggesting, as a possible solution to the enigma of his disappearance, "that when the second plane hit, Win's chagrin, his personal and professional mortification at this having happened, at the perimeter having been so easily, so terribly breached, would have been such that he might simply have ceased, in protest, to exist" (351).

Gibson's novel, written and published in the shadow of what one of its characters calls the "recent unpleasantness" in New York City (310), highlights ways in which 9/11 has become for the United States the most visible and haunting symbol of the permeability of the country's borders, its new vulnerability to outside elements. In this sense, it is no surprise how the enormous stress on "homeland security" in the administration of George W. Bush (2001–9) should have operated as a reaction against this widespread sense of dislocation and trauma. To turn a home into a "homeland" is, by definition, to move from a zone in which domestic comforts and protection could be taken for granted to one in which they had to be guarded anxiously and self-consciously; in that sense, the very phrase "homeland security" could be seen as a contradiction in terms, since it rhetorically evokes the very insecurity it is designed to assuage. As Jean Baudrillard has said, terrorism might be seen as an almost inevitable counterpart to the development of international market economies, since its enabling structures are almost identical, based as they are around the exploitation of computer and aeronautic technologies, rapid capital transfers, the wide dissemination of scientific and other kinds of information, and the all-encompassing power of a global media: above all, the power of terrorism trades off a culture of TV spectacle ("L'Esprit" 409). Whereas for most Americans, World War II and the subsequent cold war took place in alien locations, the distant world of European battlefields or the shadowy realm of spies coming in from the cold, the most uncomfortable

thing about 9/11 was the way it demonstrated how borders separating the domestic from the foreign could no longer be so easily policed or, indeed, even identified. Such permeability became conflated in the minds of many Americans both with a threat to Christian fundamentalist values and with the loss of job security for large numbers of people in what Edward Soja has called a “postfordist” economic landscape (*Postmodern 3*), one driven by internationally mobile capital and technology rather than by labor or other traditional forms of production. The powerful impact of 9/11 might thus best be understood in terms of how it appeared not as an entirely unexpected event, a bolt from the blue, but how, on the contrary, it resonated as a symbolic culmination of the various kinds of deterritorializing forces that had been gathering pace since the Reagan years.

The larger framework here relates to the gradual diminution rather than the agglomeration of U.S. power. Political theorist Immanuel Wallerstein has concluded that the relative decline of American hegemony over the next fifty years is inevitable, not because of any particular policies pursued or not pursued by U.S. presidents but because of more structural reasons: in particular, the increasing modulation of domestic economies within a transnational axis of geopolitical space. The amorphous processes associated with globalization will affect the United States politically as well as economically: as Niall Ferguson has pointed out, any nation is less powerful politically if it has a thousand nuclear weapons when every other nation has one than if it has one and other nations none at all (299). One of the policies pursued by George W. Bush, a policy surely doomed to long-term failure, was to freeze nuclear “proliferation,” as the American administration called it, at a stage most favorable to the United States (Wallerstein 287). This is a familiar enough ploy within the annals of imperial history, going back to the ancient Romans, who attempted strenuously to prevent potential enemies from getting their hands on all kinds of dangerous weapons. But given the way the Internet has speeded up global exchanges of information, so that scientific knowledge is no longer locked within cold war vaults but rather dispersed among many different centers, such an ambition of exceptionalist superiority and isolationism, geared toward preserving U.S. world domination, would appear to have little chance of long-term success. Nor is it at all likely that, for all its politically calculated rhetoric about the “axis of evil,” U.S. governments themselves have been unaware of how this balance of power is slowly shifting. Indeed, one of President G. W. Bush’s own advisory bodies, the National Intelligence Council, produced in December 2004 a report entitled *Mapping the Global Future*, which described globalization as “an overarching ‘mega-trend,’ a force so ubiquitous that it will substantially shape all the other major trends in the world of 2020,” so that “how we mentally map the world in 2020 will change radically.” The

report went on to predict openly that, although the U.S. will continue to be “the most important single country across all the dimensions of power” by 2020, it will also see “its relative power position eroded” (10–11).

In this light, one of the most interesting aspects of contemporary American literature is how it represents ways in which these pressures of deterritorialization are being internalized and understood affectively. John Updike, for instance, came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s by chronicling the fortunes of Harry Angstrom in the Rabbit series of novels, and especially for the way he drew analogies between the fate of his main character and the contemporary condition of the United States. As we shall see in chapter 4, though, part of the structural difficulty with this Rabbit sequence is that the parallels between the life of a white Pennsylvania automobile worker and the fate of the country as a whole seem ultimately to become forced and exclusionary. Updike’s Rabbit novels are attuned specifically to the nationalist ethos of a post–World War II era when white, middle-class America was assumed to represent the fate of the country at large and when the national radio and television networks imagined themselves to be speaking on behalf of a unified people. However, in *Seek My Face* (2002), there is a specific meditation on what Updike’s narrator calls “the fading Protestant hegemony” (70–71) and on the erasure of the national security that formerly went along with such a clearly defined sense of American identity. Ensnared at the age of seventy-nine in her house in Vermont, the painter Hope Chafetz thinks of how “[o]wning this house restored her to certain simplicities of childhood, when houses and yards demarcated territories of safety and drew upon deep wells, mysterious cisterns brimming with communal reserves” (81). She also watches the evening news on television and sees in place of the regular NBC newscaster, Tom Brokaw, what she calls “a perfectly stunning young woman, light topaz eyes as far apart as a kitten’s,” whose “name wasn’t even Greek, it was more like Turkish, a quick twist of syllables like an English word spelled backward. The old American stock is being overgrown,” she thinks: “High time, of course: no reason to grieve” (11). The elegiac tone in this novel is related not only to Hope’s personal sense of aging but also to her recognition of how the old American order itself is passing, how the traditional iconography of national identity now appears to be as insecure as the superannuated charms of Christian theology, whose demise, in typical Updike fashion, is also lovingly chronicled in this book.

Another kind of map is provided by Leslie Marmon Silko as a preface to her 1991 novel *Almanac of the Dead*, a narrative that ambitiously rewrites the history of America from the standpoint of Native American communities. Centered on Tucson, Arizona, this “five hundred year map” extends from the Laguna Pueblo Reservation in the north to Mexico City

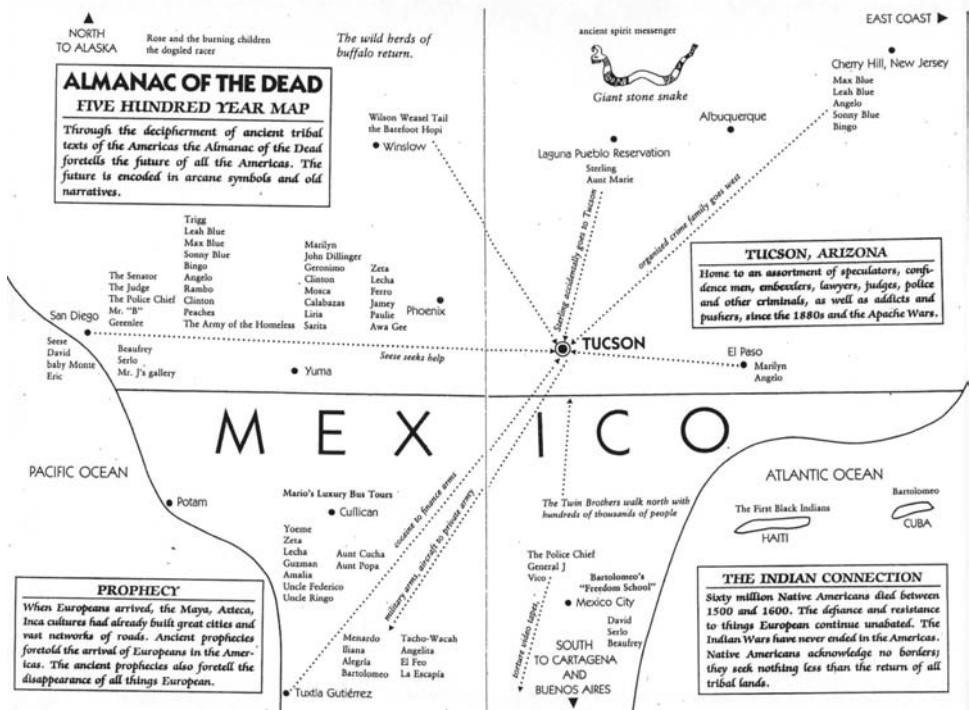


Figure 3. "Five Hundred Year Map," reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc. Copyright © 1991 by Leslie Marmon Silko. All rights reserved. From Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991).

in the south, and it represents the current U.S.–Mexico border as incidental to the flow of human and cultural traffic through this land across the centuries (14–15). The novel itself, like the cartographic image preceding it (figure 3), encompasses a perspective of inversion that involves redrawing the map of the United States in space as well as time. Silko's novel deliberately eschews the chronologies of U.S. history to establish for the Arizona region an entirely different kind of cultural vantage point, seeing the American Southwest in the context of Aztec civilizations and the Apache wars, thereby rendering the familiar national narrative of the United States contingent and reversible. This in turn works as a corollary to the chronology of "the people's history" (742) in the last section of this book, which foregrounds slave history and chooses provocatively to overlook the celebrated landmarks of established U.S. history. Silko herself has described the U.S. government as an illegitimate enterprise founded on land stolen from Native American peoples, though *Alma-*

nac of the Dead portrays American culture more in terms of a complex legacy of mixed ancestries, a hybrid concoction of Spanish and other indigenous cultures interlinked with the apparatus of the global village. Elsewhere, Silko has written in her essay “The Border Patrol State” of the shift after 1980 by agencies of the U.S. government away from an exclusive emphasis on guarding the mythical “Iron Curtain”; instead, the Immigration and Naturalization Service sought at the end of the twentieth century to prevent free travel not only across but also within U.S. borders, especially in the American Southwest, thereby constructing the kind of defensive mechanisms against a perceived threat of mass migration and “illegal aliens” (121) that anticipated the subsequent fetish of “homeland security.” Indeed, Native American culture offers an interesting microcosm and symbol of the current fate of U.S. culture, since the concept of deterritorialization was forcibly applied to Native American people in the early nineteenth century, when Andrew Jackson, president of the United States between 1829 and 1837, urged the nation to accept the loss of Indian tribes as inevitable. In *The Pioneers* (1823), James Fenimore Cooper represents the breakup of the ice on Lake Otsego as an organic analogue to the historical dispossession of Native American peoples, a process that the author tries effectively to naturalize.⁷ From this perspective, one might say that the loss of territorial security that was visited upon Native Americans in the nineteenth century has now become, in different ways and under different circumstances, something that is afflicting U.S. culture as a whole.

My general hypothesis, then, is that the nationalist phase of American literature and culture extended from 1865 until about 1981 and that the current transnational phase actually has more in common with writing from the periods on either side of the War of Independence, when national boundaries were much more inchoate and unsettled. The geography scholar Robert David Sack has linked the idea of territory above all to themes of power, protection, and political control, themes sometimes projected onto the territorial formation itself, as in the familiar notion of something being “the law of the land” (33). He has also written of how the notion of territory has frequently been endowed with an idea of mythical content, as in the way the ancient division of the Chinese Empire into four quarters was fondly imagined to be “a mirror of cosmic order” (77). Such forms of sublimation involve what Deleuze and Guattari called a process of “reterritorialization” (258), where the appropriation of territory is designed to occlude its own material flux, an approach that manifests itself, often in circuitous ways, even in contemporary readings of American literature. For instance, in *Landscape and Ideology in*

⁷ For a discussion of this historical process, see Lipscomb.

American Renaissance Literature, Robert E. Abrams invokes the idea of what he calls “negative geography” (2) to explain the resistance of Thoreau and others to rationalistic cartographies, cartographies understood by Abrams as alien impositions from the European world on a pristine American scene. In this reading, the escape from abstract geographical mapping into what Abrams calls “a sense of indefinite existential promise” (12) becomes an implicit guarantee of an American literary nationalism that justifies itself by its escape from “the hallucinatory authority of centralized, panoptic vision” (78), defining itself instead through its relationship to the unmapped sublime. Abrams thus critically recapitulates the classic transcendentalist move whereby the erasure of specific locations in history and geography becomes the sign of the writer’s separatist self-reliance and American authenticity. But to place culture and geography in this kind of mutually exclusive relationship is, of course, to overlook ways in which their narratives are inextricably intertwined. In this sense, Abrams’s version of “negative geography” operates much like a traditional form of dehistoricization, a transliteration of material conditions into a version of mythic idealism from which the lineaments of time and space are frozen out. By contrast, a discourse of geographical materialism would seek to restore these spatial dynamics to American literature.

In an era of global warming and various other forms of transnational circulation, when issues of the environment cannot be reduced simply to local or national specificities, such a dissolution of spatial relations into “negative geography” must surely appear a parochial strategy. One of the conceptual problems associated with the study of U.S. literature has always been an inbred tendency toward a relatively constricted theoretical matrix, with the culture’s own distinct preference for familiar terms of reference and supposedly natural affinities with the native soil engendering a self-perpetuating loop through which American writers were critically validated for being identifiably American. On the other hand, the displacement of U.S. territorial autonomy has the potential for opening up new possibilities for the study of America’s place within the world, so that theorists of transnationalism whose first allegiance is to alternative political formations might usefully be read against the grain of the American polis. For example, in *We the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, French political thinker Etienne Balibar discusses ways in which nations have traditionally attempted to guard their borders so as to preserve the integrity of their public sphere and have consequently defined themselves primarily through various mechanisms of exclusion. Balibar also points out, though, how in the twenty-first century such borders are no longer “entirely situated at the outer limit of territories” but are—through international media, finance, and so on—

dispersed everywhere within them: “border areas . . . are not marginal to the constitution of a public sphere but rather are at the center” (1–2). The primary concern of Balibar’s work is the changing political system in Europe and its slow evolution into something more like a federal union; but, by Ricoeur’s logic of “retrodition,” it is possible that such altered conditions in twenty-first-century Europe will help provoke a radical re-examination of the culture and history of the United States. Over the next fifty years, suggests David Crystal, Europe will probably evolve into a more integrated political state within which English will emerge as the dominant language, even though this use of English as a lingua franca will exist alongside a range of other European languages historically embedded in particular national cultures (5–7). What this would produce is a model of political union where multinationalism and multilingualism are the norm, and this may well induce scholars in the twenty-first century to reappraise American literary history of earlier eras, when, as we shall see in chapter 3, the official rhetoric of melting-pot assimilation and monolingualism tended simply to gloss over the many aspects of U.S. culture that did not conform to these hegemonic ideals. Rather than seeing Europe as positioned in the kind of conceptual opposition to America that characterized the exceptionalist impulse of American studies in the twentieth century, this transnational dynamic would provide an impetus for scholars to think of relations between the United States and the rest of the world in terms of more complex, analogical processes of convergence and divergence.

Deterritorialization as used by Deleuze and Guattari, then, had a quite specific psychoanalytical meaning, but the term can be extrapolated to make inferences about ways in which subjects of all kinds, both individual and national, find themselves compelled to relate to what Appadurai calls the “theory of rupture that takes media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics” (*Modernity* 3). Rather than merely understanding U.S. power to be a “colossus,” in Niall Ferguson’s imperious phrase, there is an important sense in which we should read the United States itself as one of the objects of globalization, rather than as merely its malign agent, so that all the insecurities associated with transnationalism are lived out experientially within the nation’s own borders as well. *The Global Remapping of American Literature* thus seeks to inscribe an alternative version of American literary history, one turning upon an international rather than a nationalist axis. By restoring a matrix of historical and geographical materialism to the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we come to understand how the idea of American culture has always been bound up inextricably with particular configurations of space, configurations that have changed their shape many times over the past 300 years.

It is, of course, impossible to encompass everything, and the aim of this book is not to write an encyclopedic survey but rather to offer symptomatic readings that shed a kind of refractive light on anomalies, inconsistencies, and blind spots within canonical national narratives. By relating individual authors to larger orbits and making illuminating juxtapositions between different temporal and spatial categories of American literature, I hope to raise the kinds of questions that are often occluded in “close” readings of particular texts, where meaning is treated as an immanent phenomenon. In this sense, to place American literature within a larger spatial circumference might be seen as analogous to reading it across different temporal dimensions; part of my aim in this work is to bring the conventionally partitioned field of “early” American literature more into comparative juxtaposition with the modern and postmodern periods. Indeed, the organization of this book, the first section centered on temporal and the last on spatial dimensions, is designed to offset what Doreen Massey has called the academic tendency to tame and homogenize the aleatory conditions of space by turning “geography into history, space into time” (5). Massey argues that any critique of the “historicism” of globalization—“its unilinearity, its teleology, etc.”—must also involve “reframing its spatiality,” so that such a “reconceptualization could (should) be of temporality and spatiality together” (89). By cross-cutting temporal latitudes with spatial longitudes and by considering specific U.S. regions (the South, the Pacific Northwest) alongside historical developments, this book will attempt to recognize the heterogeneous quality of global narratives, how their trajectories have operated in interestingly uneven ways across different geopolitical locations. I am aware, of course, that a choice of different geographic zones would have produced different perspectives, and chapters 5 and 6 are intended merely as examples of ways in which the spatial and temporal aspects of American literary culture have been intertwined. At the center of this book, in Part Two, is a consideration of how the subject of American literature became consolidated and institutionalized in the modernist era, together with an account of the pressures this national model came under in the second half of the twentieth century. I use the “rhetoric of broadcasting” as a way of gaining a particular analytical purchase on these changing conceptions of space, though it is, of course, not my intention to suggest that electronic media were the only contributory factors to these processes of dislocation. Edward Said’s notion of “adversarial internationalism” (*Culture* 244) might be said to take many forms, and here such a critical internationalism is designed to cut across conventional formations of American literature, suggesting how, despite the ways in which it has been buttressed by the ghosts of American exceptionalism, forms of global space have always been inherent within it. From this perspective, deterritorialization, like

transnationalism, can be seen as a doubled-up, recursive term that seeks to bracket off or problematize the trope associated with a prior metanarrative: territory, nation, or homeland. It speaks to a paradoxical situation where affective loyalties, local affiliations, and subliminal legacies are ironically traversed by larger vectors of political and economic disenfranchisement, vectors that threaten to push the nation further and further away from the representative center of its own imagined community. To speak of American literary culture under the rubric of deterritorialization is thus not simply to encumber it within monolithic orders of globalization or imperialism but, rather, to think of it as a socially constructed, historically variable and experientially edgy phenomenon, whose valence lies in the tantalizing dialectic between an illusion of presence and the continual prospect of displacement.