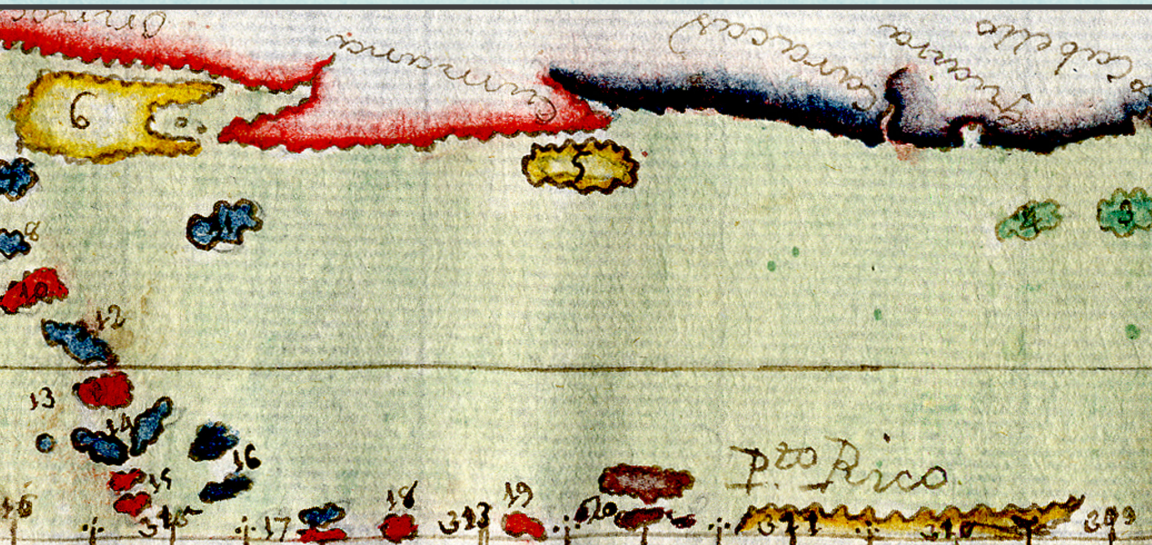
ERNESTO BASSI

An AQUEOUS TERRITORY

SAILOR GEOGRAPHIES AND NEW GRANADA'S TRANSIMPERIAL GREATER CARIBBEAN WORLD



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Cover art: Detail of Juan Álvarez de Veriñas's map of the southern portion of the transimperial Greater Caribbean. Image courtesy of Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain (MP-Panama, 262).

TO

CLAU, SANTI, AND ELISA,

mis compañeros de viaje

CONTENTS

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Writing about border crossers and the transimperial milieu they inhabited requires lots of international travel. Like Antonio Machado's (and Joan Manuel Serrat's) *caminante*, I have walked along many roads in the process of writing this book. And while I have not sailed a hundred seas, researching the lives of many who actually did has taken me to multiple archives and libraries on both sides of the Atlantic. In the process I have acquired many debts, met lots of wonderful people, and turned several libraries into my personal office.

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INTRODUCTION

Uncovering Other Possible Worlds

Geography's discursive attachment to stasis and physicality, the idea that space "just is," and that space and place are merely containers for human complexities and social relations, is terribly seductive. . . . If space and place *appear* to be safely secure and unwavering, then what space and place make possible, outside and beyond tangible stabilities . . . can potentially fade away. Geography is not, however, secure and unwavering; *we produce space*, *we produce its meanings*, and *we work very hard to make geography what it is*.

—KATHERINE MCKITTRICK, *Demonic Grounds*

On October 13, 1815, the legislature of the young republic of Cartagena approved a proposal to put the city under the protection of the British Crown. Swearing allegiance to His Britannic Majesty, Cartagena's governor Juan de Dios Amador believed, constituted "the only measure capable of saving this city." Besieged since mid-August by a strong Spanish contingent under field marshal Pablo Morillo, Cartagena, independent since November 1811, was targeted for favoring political autonomy over allegiance to King Ferdinand VII after the French invaded the Spanish Peninsula in 1808. "Let us," Governor Amador said, "offer the province [of Cartagena] to a wise and powerful Nation, capable of saving . . . and governing us. Let us put [the province] under the shelter and direction of the Monarch of Great Britain." Cartagena's legislature did not need much time to reach a decision. Persuaded that "under the circumstances manifested" the governor's proposal was "the only one capable of saving the State," the legislature unanimously approved Amador's measure and granted him power to contact the British authorities of Jamaica.[1] On the next day, Amador dispatched a commission to inform the authorities of Jamaica of the decision. That same day (October 14, 1815), Gustavo Bell Lemus tells us, "the British flag was raised in the city [of Cartagena]."[2] In Jamaica, reasserting

their recent commitment to remain neutral in Spain's conflict with its American territories, British authorities refused to provide any help to Cartagena's delegates. Without external support, Cartagena, unable to resist the Spanish siege, surrendered to Spanish forces on December 6, 1815.[3]

The siege of Cartagena is a well-known piece of Colombia's patriotic narrative.[4] Because of its tenacious resistance during the siege, the city is known to all Colombians as "the heroic city." The request of Cartagena's legislature to offer the province to the British Crown is less known. Historians of Colombia, especially those specializing in the local history of Caribbean Colombia, are familiar with the declaration but have not delved into its analytical possibilities, simply regarding it as a desperate measure taken under desperate circumstances. Since the proposal was ultimately rejected, it has been considered inconsequential, a mere anecdote with little value to understand Colombia's nation-making process.

While this book is not about Cartagena (although Cartagena figures prominently in its pages), the city's 1815 siege and, in particular, the request of its legislative body serve as a good introduction to the book's approach. Instead of a history concerned with explaining origins (i.e., a genealogy of what ended up happening), this book advances a history that rescues the notion that for any given historical outcome there were many alternatives. These alternatives, many of which, as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker put it, "have . . . been denied, ignored, or simply not seen," offer us a window to understand that what ended up happening was not bound to happen.[5] Read in this light, the request of Cartagena's legislature emerges as a telling example that "another world *was* possible," one in which, as Cartagena's legislators unsuccessfully hoped, the wars of independence that resulted in the creation of the Republic of Colombia could have resulted in the establishment of a British colony in the Caribbean coast of the Viceroyalty of New Granada.[6] This study does not depict that unrealized future (i.e., it does not pursue the counterfactual question of what might have happened if the British authorities had accepted the request of Cartagena's legislature). It does, however, take seriously the notion that a British Cartagena was a constitutive part of the "horizon of expectation" of the city's legislators.[7] It was part of what, in her analysis of colonial internationalisms in the twentieth-century interwar era, Manu Goswami called the "open-ended constellation of contending political futures" that informed what Cartagena's legislators and other city residents considered a plausible world.[8]

The implications of this approach for our understanding of Caribbean and Colombian history are considerable. To think of what the subjects we study

considered plausible forces us out of entrenched habits of narration that naturalize a definition of the Caribbean region as consisting only of the Caribbean islands and an understanding of Colombia as a country lacking strong historical connections with its Caribbean neighbors. By stressing the thick connections linking New Granada's coasts with Jamaica, Curaçao, Hispaniola, Saint Thomas, and the coastal cities of the United States (chapters 1 and 2), and by explaining the "decaribbeanization" process through which early Colombia's nation makers chose to erase these connections (chapter 6), this book uncovers ways of inhabiting the world that are not captive to anachronistic world-regionalization schemes and, thus, allows us to understand how the historical subjects we study developed a sense of place—how they located themselves in the larger world—and envisioned potential futures for themselves and those whom they claimed to represent.

An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World traces the configuration of a geographic space—the transimperial Greater Caribbean—and the multiple projects its inhabitants developed to envision their future, their geopolitical imagination.[9] It approaches these two processes from the perspective of the Caribbean coast of northwestern South America—from Cape Gracias a Dios to the Guajira Peninsula, or what during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was referred to in Spanish sources as the northern provinces of the Viceroyalty of New Granada and in British sources as the Spanish Main. From this geographical vantage point, the study of the configuration of a transimperial Greater Caribbean and its inhabitants' geopolitical imagination turns into a study of the creation of a transimperial geography that connected Caribbean New Granada with the "British" Caribbean (especially Jamaica), the "French" Caribbean (especially Saint-Domingue or Haiti), the "Dutch" Caribbean (especially Curaçao), and, under specific circumstances explained in chapter 1, "Danish" Saint Thomas and the United States.[10]

The geographical vantage point of the analysis is important because it allows for the transimperial Greater Caribbean—a regional space that in chapter 2 I define as malleable and flexible—to look different, to cover a different area depending on the vantage point taken. While from the vantage point of New Granada's Caribbean coast, Neogranadan ports like Portobelo, Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Riohacha and ports that face the southern Caribbean Sea (Kingston, Les Cayes, Curaçao) appear prominently, the use of a different vantage point results in other ports taking center stage. Studies of New Orleans as commercial center of a geographic space similarly evolving from transimperial or transnational connections, for example, make ports like

Havana and Cap Français (later Cap Haïtien) more visible. Something similar happens when Florida becomes the vantage point. When studying commercial connections between New Spain (Mexico) and the Caribbean, Veracruz, Havana, Puerto Rico, Spanish Florida, Spanish Louisiana, and Santo Domingo, all of which received *situados* (financial transfers to cover defense expenditures) from the Viceroyalty of New Spain, appear as the key nodal points of the Greater Caribbean.[11]

The geographical vantage point also highlights the extent to which key economic and social institutions spread unevenly through space. Slavery, for the purposes of this book, provides the best example. While from the vantage point of Cuba the demand for more slaves that emerged immediately after the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution ushered in the island's sugar revolution and its concomitant loyal adherence to the Spanish Crown, similar cries voiced from New Granada's Caribbean shores were initially ignored or not heard by imperial authorities and then completely silenced by the turmoil and diplomatic imperatives of the wars of independence. From Cuban shores, thus, slavery and enslaved people were among the most visible elements of a transimperial Greater Caribbean.[12] The view from New Granada was quite different. Because *An Aqueous Territory* embraces the Greater Caribbean from New Granada's shores, slavery appears in this book more as a project in the minds of bureaucrats and local elites who aspired to become wealthy planters than as a reality experienced in the flesh by a large group of the region's inhabitants. This is not to say that there were no slaves on New Granada's Caribbean shores but that the northern provinces of the viceroyalty were, like Cuba before its sugar revolution, "more a society with slaves than a slave society."[13]

An Aqueous Territory advances two central arguments: first, that in the decades between the end of the Seven Years' War and the final years of the wars that led to the emergence of the Republic of Colombia, sailors frequently crisscrossing political borders in Caribbean and Atlantic waters and gathering and spreading information obtained at ports and on the high seas constructed the space of social interaction, or region, that I call the transimperial Greater Caribbean; second, that, like sailors, many other less mobile subjects used this transimperial geographical framework as a chalkboard on which they conceived analyses of their present and visions of potential futures. While many of these visions never came to fruition, those who envisioned them certainly intended to turn them into reality. Because both mobile sailors and less mobile coastal and island denizens influenced and were influenced by the development of this transimperial geography, it can be asserted that the actors of

this book lived in what Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof has called "a transnational [or transimperial] social field." Life in this transimperial milieu led them to develop what Micol Seigel called "transnational [or transimperial] mental maps" that allowed them to make sense of the world they inhabited.[14]

Given the agitated geopolitical environment of the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, the circumstances under which Caribbean dwellers created spaces and envisioned futures were complex and full of contradictions. During the Age of Revolutions the political map of the Atlantic as well as its commercial codes and legal cultures were greatly transformed. New republics began to emerge where there had previously been colonies and European overseas territories. Imperial reformers successfully pushed for less stringent commercial restrictions, and European powers began to view interimperial trade in more favorable terms while remaining wary of the smuggling practices associated with these commercial transactions.[15] Slavery and the slave trade became targets of criticism—from below and from above—that led several empires and emerging republics to abolish one or the other during the first decade of the nineteenth century. At the same time, however, the period witnessed the biggest increase in slave imports to the Americas, a trend that was particularly marked in Spanish America, which, in the century between the outbreak of the American Revolution and 1866, imported 60 percent of the slaves it imported since the beginning of the slave trade.[16] As Greg Grandin forcefully argued, the Age of Revolutions, sometimes characterized as the Age of Liberty, was also the Age of Slavery. From Spanish American shores the calls for "*más libertad*" were accompanied by cries for "*más comercio de negros*—more liberty, more free trade of blacks."[17] These dramatic transformations and contradictions nourished Caribbean inhabitants' sense of what was possible, sharpening their awareness of what geographer Doreen Massey has called "contemporaneous plurality" and, most likely, emboldening many to pursue chimeric projects conceived within the Greater Caribbean's transimperial geography.[18]

This book uncovers other worlds by making visible a geographic space that was lived and experienced but not necessarily filled with the patriotic sentiment of nation-states or the geopolitically charged justifications of area-studies divisions. Additionally, because most of the projects pursued by the subjects who populate this work did not reach fruition, *An Aqueous Territory* uncovers other worlds in the sense that it complicates standard narratives of the Age of Revolutions that see this period as one of violent, but straightforward, transition from colony to nation. By contrast, taking seriously the conception of these

projects and the belief that they constituted plausible scenarios, this book reveals the existence of "structures of feeling" that crossed imperial borders and determined transimperial "ways of being in the world," many of which have remained silenced by the historiographical weight of national states, nation-making projects, and nationalisms.[19]

Border-Crossing and the Creation of a Transimperial Greater Caribbean

The process of creating spaces is associated with one of two key terms that constitute the conceptual foundations of this study: spatial configurations. Following Edward Soja and other scholars of space, I argue against the existence of "an already-made geography [that] sets the stage" for history to happen.[20] Instead, with Doreen Massey, I take space "as always in process," "as always under construction."[21] The recognition of this dynamic and constructed nature of space is crucial in two respects. First, it forces us to ask questions about the nature of the construction process. Who is constructing the space? Through what processes? Under what circumstances? Second, it requires us to interrogate the outcome of the process. What is the shape of the space that is being created? To whom is this space meaningful and how? How does this space enable a better understanding of the world, peoples, and period we are studying? While these questions are empirically answered in chapters 1 and 2, it is worth laying out some of the theoretical and methodological sources that inform my approach to these spatial questions. The idea of region is a good place to begin.

Region, like nation, is a commonly used term. Unlike nation and nationalism, however, region and regionalism have not been subjected to acute historical scrutiny. The fact that region is used to describe both subnational and supranational geographic spaces reveals the degree to which the term remains undertheorized.[22] In fact, as historian Michael Goebel put it, it seems that the most common way to define a region is "through what it is not: a nation."[23] Despite this sharp distinction, regions and nations (or, more precisely, the territorialized versions of nations: nation-states) have many things in common.

Like nation-states (and empires), regions occupy space and, because of that, can be located on maps. Unlike nation-states (and empires), however, regions' precise locations tend to be difficult to determine. Even for regions with denominations commonly used (e.g., the South East in the United Kingdom, the South in the United States, the Bajío in Mexico, Southeast Asia, Latin

America, the Atlantic), "it is very difficult to say precisely where [a region's] edges" are or when a particular region constitutes a coherent geographic unit of analysis.[24] Regions, historians tend to agree, are "elusive" and characterized by their "fuzziness."[25] Should the elusiveness and fuzziness of regions be regarded as a problem to be solved? Should historians aim to establish criteria that make it possible to define regions as clearly bounded spatial units? In other words, how should historians conceptualize regions and what, ultimately, is the trouble with regions?

Following geographers John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Allan Cochrane and critical theorist Michel de Certeau, I contend that regions should be conceptualized as fluidly bounded and amorphously demarcated spatial units shaped and reshaped through everyday social interactions.[26] This approach calls for understanding regions as meaningful geographic spaces that make sense to those who experience them on a daily basis. While what is meaningful and makes sense appears to be intangible and difficult to measure, it allows me to point to a crucial element of regions: "they are," as Eric van Young put it, "difficult to describe but we know them when we see them."[27]

Thinking of regions in these terms, in turn, creates another set of problems associated with the need to make regions comprehensible and visible to scholars accustomed (and even trained) to see spatial units in close connection to political geographies, most of which are constructed based on what Neil Smith and Ann Godlewska called a "European planetary consciousness" that privileges empires, republics, and other clearly bounded spaces over equally cohesive (at least to those who experienced them) but less clearly demarcated spatial units.[28] The problem, as Fernando Coronil argued, is that we "lack . . . an alternative taxonomy" that allows us to identify and name spatial units that might have been lived realities but that did not benefit from the elaborated apparatus that enabled empires and nation-states to occupy central stage in the historical imagination.[29] After all, regions, unlike empires and nation-states, are not generally backed up by administrative bureaucracies, nationalist ideologies and discourses, political agendas, and other propagandistic devices that grant political geographies archival visibility and the ability to endure in collective memory.[30] How, given their lack of this elaborated apparatus that, taught to those who learn to feel national pride and nationalist fervor, works as the glue that holds nations together, can regions—especially those constructed from below—be imagined and made visible? My contention is that taking mobility as a defining criterion has the potential to illuminate regional configurations and communities that

escape the eyes trained or coerced to look for "imagined communities" that cohere around linguistic, religious, or ethnic units, the weight of imperial bureaucracies, and the printed trail left behind by patriotic narratives, cartographic representations, and other cultural artifacts of nation making.[31]

Mobility, Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman claim, "create[s] spaces and stories."[32] Through mobility individuals fill space with meaning; they develop "a sense of place"; they "endow . . . significance to space."[33] During the Age of Sail, sailors were the mobile actors par excellence. Frequently moving across political borders in a constant circulation between ports, islands, and coasts, individual sailors traced personal paths that gave shape to their very own lived geographies. The aggregation of innumerable lived geographies makes it possible to see the contours of what in chapter 2 I call the aqueous territory that constitutes the transimperial Greater Caribbean. The region that emerges of the sum of individual sailors' mobilities is one that can be characterized as amorphously bounded, flexible, malleable, multicultural, geopolitically unstable, and both personally threatening and liberating. In this transimperial space, in addition, the sea, far from being "just . . . a space that facilitates movement between a region's nodes," emerges as a central component of the regional configuration.[34] "Rather than an interval between places," it becomes "a place."[35]

Unearthing the transimperial Greater Caribbean that emerges from the aggregation of sailors' personal geographies, I argue, contributes to a better understanding of the world that sailors and the other characters of this book inhabited. Rescuing this aqueous territory as a constructed and evolving lived geography constitutes an important antidote to historical narratives that take nation-states, area-studies divisions, and empires as geographic units of analysis that remain fixed through time. Fixing geography—or, as Patrick Manning put it in his critique of the "parochialism and exceptionalism" characteristic of area studies, limiting the geographic unit of analysis ex ante—creates the fiction that history unfolds within clearly bounded, previously determined, and historically static areas.[36] In doing so, the demarcation of an area silences many lived experiences and hinders our understanding of the world, peoples, and times we study. In other words, historians working within previously defined geographic units of analysis projected backward onto a past for which these units lack explanatory power run the risk of misinterpreting the lives of the subjects they study. As Walter Johnson argued in his reframing of the history of the Mississippi Valley's Cotton Kingdom and the U.S. Civil War, framing the stories we tell "according to a set of anachronistic spatial frames and teleological

narratives" hinders our ability to understand where the subjects that we study "thought they were going and how they thought they could pull it off."[37]

In the specific context of this book, the implication of uncovering the transimperial Greater Caribbean as seen from New Granada's shores is that it represents an explicit acknowledgment that the subjects under study did not live lives bounded by the political geographies of the time nor were their lived experiences circumscribed by geographical frameworks defined after their own time. Their lives, in short, make evident the extant, but limited, value of using geographical labels like Colombia, Caribbean, Latin America, and Atlantic to encapsulate their lived experiences and understand how they interpreted their place in the world. This book's subjects inhabited a space that comprised islands, continental coasts, and open waters, a space that was not exclusively Spanish, British, or French but simultaneously Spanish, British, and French, as well as Dutch, Danish, Anglo-American, African—or, more specifically, Cocolí, Bran, Biafada, Zape, Kimbanda, and more—and indigenous, or, more precisely, Wayuu, Cuna, Miskito, Carib, Creek, and more. Theirs, as a historian of Curaçao's place in the early modern Atlantic has put it, was a world of "connections that extended across political, geographic, legal, socioeconomic, and ethnic boundaries, beyond a single colony or empire."[38] It was an "entangled" world.[39] The transimperial Greater Caribbean brings these entanglements to the analytical center stage and, because of this, constitutes an alternative framework that, like other ocean- or sea-based world regionalization schemes, "allow[s] us to see some things clearly, while making others difficult to detect."[40] The implication here is not that a transimperial Greater Caribbean framework is inherently better than other geographical frameworks but that uncovering it brings to life human interactions occluded by conventional definitions of the Caribbean that tend to create an artificial barrier between the continent's coasts and the Caribbean islands.

Like many other geographical labels, "Caribbean" constitutes an example of the type of "summary statements" that, Ann Stoler believes, need to be further scrutinized.[41] The term must be recognized as an "inaccurate but convenient label," whose uncritical use can result in the production of historical narratives that unconsciously silence key aspects of the lived experiences of the subjects we study and, unconsciously or not, tend to transform history into a teleological narrative that forecloses the possibility of thinking geographical spaces (and history) otherwise.[42]

Defining the Caribbean constitutes a sort of rite of passage for Caribbeanists. Following and expanding the tracks laid down by Sidney Mintz,

innumerable Caribbeanists have given us a variety of answers to the question, What is the Caribbean?[43] Emphasizing the role of the Plantation (with a capital P) as unifying factor, Mintz, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Franklin Knight, and many others have defined the Caribbean as a "societal area" characterized by its "lowland, subtropical, insular economy," a history of European colonialism that featured the swift extirpation of the region's native population, the development of export-oriented agricultural productive units, the massive introduction of foreign populations (mostly African slaves but also Asian coolies), a persistence of colonialism, and the emergence of what Knight called a "fragmented nationalism."[44] The outcome of this characterization, when visualized on a map, is a geographic space that encompasses Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, the Lesser Antilles, Belize, and the Guianas. The continent's Caribbean coasts, thus, are mostly denied their belonging to the Caribbean.

Efforts to understand the Caribbean beyond the Plantation have allowed historians to visualize the region as a larger geographic space, as a Greater Caribbean.[45] Emphasizing environmental factors, Matthew Mulcahy, Sherry Johnson, and Stuart Schwartz have demonstrated that hurricanes can be region makers. In their studies, a natural phenomenon—hurricanes—gives coherence to a geographic space that forces us to reconsider the size and limits of the Caribbean. Their Greater Caribbean is a region defined by nature—it is there. Humans do not create it; they adapt to it.[46] Allowing more room for humans in the creation of the Greater Caribbean, J. R. McNeill combines ecological contexts with human activity to show how humans, in their capacity as agents of environmental change, turned what was already an ideal site for the incubation of the mosquitoes that carry malaria and yellow fever into an improved breeding and feeding ground where these mosquitoes could thrive. In McNeill's approach, thus, the malaria- and yellow fever–carrying mosquitoes, aided by the deforestation and soil depletion humans produced, gave meaning to a geographic space comprising "the Atlantic coastal regions of South, Central, and North America, as well as the Caribbean islands themselves, that in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became plantation zones: from Surinam to the Chesapeake."[47] This Greater Caribbean was not just there for humans to adapt to it, as that of Schwartz, Mulcahy, and Johnson. Instead, it emerged as an unintended consequence of human activity on an area that shared a set of ecological traits.

An Aqueous Territory proposes another approach: one that stresses the human-made nature of regional configurations, the role of social interactions in

the creation of regions, and the dangers associated with projecting twentieth-century world regionalization schemes back onto a past for which they lack explanatory power. While not inherently better than other approaches to the region, the Greater Caribbean of this book offers a historically sensitive way of understanding how the sea captains and sailors, military adventurers, indigenous peoples, imperial bureaucrats, insurgent leaders, and nation makers that populate this book's pages produced, used, and transformed a geographic space. A transimperial Greater Caribbean framework enables a better understanding of the ways in which these mobile and not-so-mobile subjects "order[ed] their knowledge [and experience] of the world."[48] Paraphrasing Karl Marx, it is possible to assert that just as "men [and women] make their own history," people make their own geography. Neither history nor geography are made "under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past" and, it must be added, the present.[49]

Envisioning Futures in a Transimperial Greater Caribbean Milieu

The second key term that provides conceptual coherence to this book is geopolitical imagination. By geopolitical imagination, I understand, following geographers John Agnew and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, the ways in which individuals and groups "visualiz[e] global space" and conceive and present arguments about "the future direction of world affairs" and "the coming shape of the world political map."[50] This definition allows for every person to be a geopolitical analyst—it democratizes geopolitics and the geopolitical imagination—thus taking the exclusive rights to a geopolitical imagination away from "major actors and commentators" to put geopolitics within the reach of subalterns and other *minor* actors.[51]

As used in this book, the concept is closely related to imagined communities, the term Benedict Anderson popularized as a way to define a nation and the nationalist pride of belonging to such a political community.[52] While Anderson's origins inquiry—he was interested in explaining "the origins and spread of nationalism"—allowed him to develop a compelling explanation of why and how the nation-state became the hegemonic way of envisioning and organizing global space, it made him blind to the existence of what Akhil Gupta called "other forms of imagining community" or "structures of feelings that bind people to geographical units larger than nations or that crosscut national borders."[53] Like Gupta, as well as Partha Chatterjee and Arjun Appadurai, I seek to uncover

visions of community that ended up being "overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial [national] state."[54] That the nation-state ended up being the hegemonic "imagined political community" does not mean that it was destined to be.[55]

The notion of geopolitical imagination is also associated with the concept of "mental maps." Defined as "the ways in which people build up images of other places," mental maps invite us to approach the world of those we study in their own subjective terms, which is to say, to imagine the "imaginary worlds" they imagined.[56] Mental maps usually result in the production of geographical distortions that transform absolute space (i.e., space that can be "measured by distance: inches, feet, meters, miles, etc.") into a mental construction in which other variables become consciously or unconsciously chosen tools to measure and experience proximity.[57] Mental maps allow us to understand that distance, as Sylvia Sellers-García put it, is "less a question of measurement and more a question of perspective."[58] Remoteness and proximity are in the eye of the beholder. In the transimperial Greater Caribbean, as this book shows, the sense of distance or proximity could be measured through—among many other variables—fear of invasion, availability and affordability of goods, access to news and information, desire for revenge, the threat of economic decline, racial prejudice, and intellectual formation. Rather than imposing on the subjects I study anachronistic ways of seeing, experiencing, and envisioning the world, thinking about their mental maps allows me to frame their actions within their own frameworks of interpretation. In this sense, instead of limiting their field of vision by forcing their imagination to fit within predetermined geographical compartments that forcefully separate what was actually connected, I let those whose lives I study define their world and show us the potential futures they envisioned and the projects through which they sought to implement them.

For the inhabitants of New Granada who participated in the creation of the transimperial Greater Caribbean and took part (or intended to take part) in projects conceived within this transimperial milieu, a future as members of a political community we now know as the Colombian nation was only one of many imagined possibilities. That the imagined political community called Colombia ended up prevailing should not discourage the study of the multiple alternative communities to which New Granada's inhabitants imagined they could belong. In terms of geographical extension, the communities envisioned ranged in size from tiny independent city- and island-states like the ephemeral republics established in Caracas, Cartagena, and Florida

(Muskogee and Amelia Island) to the ambitious continental project of creating a vast, hemispheric confederation of independent republics.[59] Regarding the political model best suited to these nascent political entities, the visions included dreams of establishing an independent, constitutional monarchy preceded by a European prince, debates about the type of republicanism—federalist or centralist—that needed to be established, and even projects to paint northern South America imperial pink and incorporate it into the British Empire.[60] In the transimperial Greater Caribbean of the Age of Revolutions, people literally lived between a variety of imperial projects and national dreams.

Their projects, associated as they indeed were with particular mental maps or with what, following Thongchai Winichakul, can be called an imagined "geo-body," allow us to visualize in cartographic ways the potential futures that they envisioned.[61] Thus, while maritime Indians (chapter 3) envisioned a future of continued political autonomy through enduring connections with non-Spanish Europeans, Jamaica planters and merchants visualized a future map of the Americas in which northern South America would be incorporated into a refashioned British Empire (chapter 4). Meanwhile, Simón Bolívar (chapter 5) and early Colombia's nation makers (chapter 6) envisioned an emerging Colombian nation either fully incorporated or at least fullheartedly accepted (by its European and North American brethren) into the Euro-Atlantic community of civilized nations. Evidently, these visions offer only a limited scope of the projects that transimperial Greater Caribbean dwellers imagined. They are intended to illustrate rather than to exhaust the analytical possibilities of using the transimperial Greater Caribbean as geographic unit of analysis.

Worthy of mention here, given their notoriety in Caribbean history and their conspicuous presence in the transimperial Greater Caribbean, is the absence of specific analysis of the geopolitical imagination of sailors, slaves, and free people of color. Their absence should not be taken as indication that they lacked a geopolitical imagination or that the projects and futures they envisioned were less important than those included in this study. Sailors, for instance, were not merely creators of spaces that others used to develop projects and visions for the future. Sailors, as Marcus Rediker has amply demonstrated, also "imagined and sometimes actually built subversive alternatives" to imperial regimes and "autonomous zones" that they ruled through their own unwritten codes.[62] Like them (sometimes with and almost always because of them) the slaves and free people of color who experienced the transimperial

Greater Caribbean from New Granada's shores envisioned plausible futures based on the news and information they gathered in port cities like Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Riohacha. As the work of Marixa Lasso and Aline Helg has demonstrated, the enslaved and free colored populations, just like those whose projects and visions I analyze in this book, used the transimperial Greater Caribbean that sailors created to envision the future direction of the events that were shaking the world they inhabited.[63] For all of them, the transimperial Greater Caribbean offered a canvas on which they could conceive and develop visions of potential futures. *An Aqueous Territory* should be taken as an invitation to continue to explore the numerous visions that the existence of a transimperial Greater Caribbean made possible.

Toward a More Balanced Atlantic

While primarily conceived as a study of spatial configurations and geopolitical imagination, *An Aqueous Territory* is at the crossroads of a number of historiographical traditions. Its analysis of communication networks in the Greater Caribbean inserts New Granada into ongoing conversations about the role of sailors as carriers of information and about the growth of interimperial trade in the western Atlantic in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution.[64] The case studies of the Greater Caribbean's geopolitics and geopolitical imagination explore the possibilities of using Caribbean New Granada as a testing ground for indigenous-European encounters (with an emphasis on indigenous perspectives and ability to maintain their political autonomy), British imperial history, Haitian revolutionary studies, and the Atlantic nature of Spanish America's nation-making process.[65] But above all, this study situates New Granada (and by extension Latin America) at the heart of an Atlantic historiography that, despite, the recent surge in studies that pursue transnational or transimperial connections, continues to reproduce the fiction of the existence of what David Hancock self-critically called an "Age of Imperial Self-Sufficiency."[66]

Like Hancock, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen have lamented the tendency of "scholarship on British, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Atlantics" to follow "separate trajectories." This compartmentalization of Atlantic history, they rightly claim, produces "the unhappy result that twenty-first-century scholars sometimes fail to notice influences that would have been obvious to early modern individuals."[67] By depicting a world of actions and imaginations that refuse categorization within neatly defined

national or imperial compartments, *An Aqueous Territory* has the potential to correct a historiographical map of the Atlantic in which, as Allan Greer noted, "the phrase 'Atlantic history' frequently serves as shorthand for the history of the *British* Atlantic in the early modern period."[68] This book, in short, contributes to what Roquinaldo Ferreira—in his study of the transoceanic connections that created a Brazilian-Angolan "social and cultural continuum"—called the need to "rebalanc[e] Atlantic history."[69] In addition, my work contributes to the rebalancing effort by responding to the increased "global awareness" of U.S. colonial historians who have created what a historian of New France called "the brave new borderless world of colonial history."[70]

An Aqueous Territory is not alone in its effort to uncover lived experiences that allow us to see Atlantic empires and their borders as "entangled," "hybrid," "porous," "fluid," and "permeable" and the Caribbean as a hub of transimperial interactions.[71] Transimperial interactions were, of course, experienced by those who frequently crossed political borders. But physical mobility was not the only way to experience transimperialism. As James Epstein has demonstrated, sharing an island with a large French population and living under British control while maintaining a Spanish legal and judicial system, the residents of Trinidad during the first decade of the nineteenth century did not need to move to live in a transimperial milieu.[72] Similarly, as Cuba made its transition from society with slaves to slave society (1790s–1820s), Cuban residents experienced the transimperial forces shaping the present and future of the Spanish island. While in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution the emerging Cuban planter class rushed to import sugar-making machinery and to welcome French sugar planters and technicians, the island's slaves and free people of color demonstrated familiarity with transimperial currents of thought and information when they used British and French abolitionist ideas and news from Haiti to argue for an expansion of their rights.[73] Like them, slaves, free people of color, and indigenous groups in Florida formulated and implemented strategies of resistance based on their acquaintance with U.S., British, and Spanish legal systems. Their familiarity with the legal pluralism of Florida demonstrates their understanding of themselves as inhabitants of a transimperial world.[74]

Like many inhabitants of Anglo North America, Trinidad, Cuba, and Florida, the people who inhabited New Granada's Caribbean provinces lived in an entangled world. Transimperial interactions allowed them to experience and imagine a Greater Caribbean and the Atlantic from New Granada's shores. The sailors, royal authorities, maritime Indians, slaves, merchants, and free people of

color who directly or indirectly embraced the transimperial Greater Caribbean from New Granada's shores were part of and, indeed, constructed a world in which indigenous-European encounters, British imperial history, Haitian revolutionary studies, and Spanish American independence and nation making could comfortably fit in a single, larger narrative of revolutionary transformations in a transimperial, multilingual, cosmopolitan, and entangled Atlantic world.

Organization of the Book

The book is organized in two parts. Part I, Spatial Configurations, traces the process of configuration of the region I call the transimperial Greater Caribbean, emphasizing the role of commercial policies and following ships and their captains and crews as they crisscrossed Caribbean and Atlantic waters. Taken together, the two chapters that make up part I advance an argument for the quotidian nature of border crossing in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Greater Caribbean. Based largely on shipping returns for the ports of Caribbean New Granada (particularly Cartagena and Santa Marta) and Jamaica (especially Kingston), these two chapters also uncover the role of mobility and communication networks in the configuration of transimperial geographies and contribute to historians' ongoing efforts to challenge assumptions regarding the existence of isolated spheres of self-sufficient empires.

Chapter 1, "Vessels: Routes, Size, and Frequency," studies interimperial trade from the vantage point of New Granada's Caribbean ports from the effective instauration of *comercio libre y protegido* (free and protected trade) in the mid-1780s to the final years of the independence wars that led to the creation of the Republic of Colombia. While not new, these commercial exchanges across political borders grew in intensity during the second half of the eighteenth century. Following the paths of ships that frequently crisscrossed imperial political boundaries connecting New Granada's Caribbean coasts to foreign colonies, this chapter argues that from the 1760s, and with more intensity after the American Revolution, the Caribbean was turning into a de facto free trade area largely, but not exclusively, controlled by Great Britain from the Caribbean commercial center of Kingston, Jamaica.

In chapter 2, "Sailors: Border Crossers and Region Makers," I shift from ships to people. Focusing on the navigational trajectories of captains and sailors who, between the 1780s and the 1810s, connected New Granada's ports with other Caribbean and Atlantic ports, this chapter argues that the circulation of people and information made possible the emergence and consolidation of

the aqueous territory I call the transimperial Greater Caribbean. Sea captains and the crews they commanded were the creators of this transimperial region. Their circulation and the information they spread resulted in the creation of what Michel de Certeau called a "theater of actions," whose configuration challenges preconceived notions about the existence of isolated Spanish, British, and French imperial spheres.[75]

Part II, Geopolitics and Geopolitical Imagination, focuses on how the transimperial region made possible by the communication networks detailed in part I facilitated the development of geopolitical projects that included, among many others, a persistent autonomy in the face of European encroachments (chapter 3), a vision of a British Empire in New Granada's Caribbean coast (chapter 4), Simón Bolívar's failed dream of a British-sponsored independent South American republic (chapter 5), and the imagined construction of an Andean republic that mirrored the North Atlantic bastions of civilization (chapter 6). The four chapters present case studies conceptually glued together by the key notion of the geopolitical imagination. While broad enough to provide a good idea of the sense of possibilities that characterized life in the transimperial Greater Caribbean during the Age of Revolutions, these case studies are far from exhausting the multiplicity of projects through which those experiencing this aqueous territory from New Granada's shores interpreted their present and envisioned potential futures. If these case studies demonstrate that other worlds were possible, they also imply that these other worlds were not limited to those analyzed in these chapters.

Chapter 3, "Maritime Indians, Cosmopolitan Indians," studies the connections that allowed Cunas and Wayuu to become cosmopolitan. It also emphasizes how the interactions associated with cosmopolitanism put these indigenous groups on an equal footing with European allies and rivals and allowed them to sustain their challenge to Spanish authorities and remain unconquered. In the process, by emphasizing indigenous mobility, multilingualism, technological capacity, and political autonomy, the chapter challenges geographical fictions of territorial control embedded in European-drawn maps of the Caribbean and sheds light on European perceptions of indigenous peoples (and what these perceptions actually say about the maritime Indians). In short, this chapter argues that the maritime Indians, like the people Ira Berlin and Jane Landers called "Atlantic creoles," were "cosmopolitan in the fullest sense." Like Atlantic creoles, maritime Indians were "familiar with the commerce of the Atlantic, fluent in its new languages, and intimate with its trade and cultures."[76]

In chapter 4, "Turning South before Swinging East," I use the stretch of coast from Central America's Mosquito Coast to the port city of Cartagena in the Viceroyalty of New Granada as a window to the geopolitical imagination of Caribbean merchants and planters, royal officers, and military adventurers. This coastal territory, largely populated by independent indigenous groups dexterous in using the Anglo-Spanish rivalry to their own advantage, served as a chalkboard for these different groups to draw their visions of the future. Jamaican planters and merchants struggling with the scarcities generated by the prohibition on trade with the newly independent United States sought alternative sources from which to obtain foodstuffs, wood, and cattle to feed the island's plantation economy. Military adventurers—especially British loyalists eager to avenge British defeat in the American Revolution—and merchants with interests in Central and northern South America looked to turn this area into a territory formally or informally dominated by Britain. New Granada's authorities sought to establish effective control of the area—an achievement that, Viceroy Antonio Caballero y Góngora believed, required promoting trade and developing the region's productive capacity through the promotion of cotton cultivation. This chapter brings together the visions of these three groups to argue that, in the aftermath of the American Revolution, their disparate interests converged around the idea and necessity of keeping the British Empire Atlantic centered (at a time when India's appeal to British imperial authorities was on the rise).

Chapter 5, "Simón Bolívar's Caribbean Adventures," follows Bolívar's route of Caribbean exile from mid-1815 to early 1817 to explain the role of Jamaica and Haiti in Spanish America's wars of independence. Locating Bolívar within a larger group of creole military adventurers who used their Caribbean exile to plot projects to return to the mainland and revive the war for independence, this chapter advances four arguments that shed light on the geopolitical imagination of creole adventurers, British and Spanish imperial officials, and independent Haiti's government authorities. First, I argue that Haitian president Alexandre Pétion's pro-insurgent diplomacy and Jamaican authorities' adherence to British neutrality allowed Haiti to emerge as an international revolutionary center actively exporting revolution. Second, the gradual success of British military campaigns against Napoleon and Caribbean-wide fears of the spread of Haitian revolutionary ideals deterred Jamaican authorities from supporting Spanish American insurgents. Third, guaranteeing British neutrality policy and attempting to hold Pétion true to his promise of neutrality required policing and diplomatic pressure from Spanish officials in New

Granada, Venezuela, and the Spanish Caribbean islands. Finally, that a combination of news about developments in Europe, personal fears of the Haitian Revolution, and Enlightenment ideas about race and civilization informed Bolívar's expectations for support and strategy during his Caribbean journey.

In chapter 6, "An Andean-Atlantic Nation," I trace the nineteenth-century process of imagining and constructing Colombia as what I call an Andean-Atlantic nation. Shifting the geographical vantage point from New Granada's Caribbean coast to its Andean capital, this chapter studies the process through which two groups of Colombian nation makers—*criollos ilustrados* (enlightened creoles) and politician-geographers—endeavored to decaribbeanize the nascent republic and to create an Andean-Atlantic republic that was to resemble civilized Europe and the United States. Their efforts illustrate key elements of enlightened creoles' geopolitical imagination and make it possible to understand why the transimperial Greater Caribbean did not find its way into Colombia's nation-making narrative.

Uncovering other worlds or acknowledging that other worlds were and continue to be possible, in my approach, takes the form of an interest in articulating regions otherwise, in articulating lived geographies that do not respond to contemporary or anachronistic world regionalization schemes excessively respectful of political geographies. The challenge is to develop ways that allow us to see beyond political geographies and imposed world regionalization schemes that clearly informed but never fully reproduced the many ways in which groups and individuals created, experienced, imagined, and envisioned their world.[77] In taking up this challenge, *An Aqueous Territory* should work as a reminder that for any given historical outcome there were "other possibilities, other ways of being in the world, and other opportunities that were figuratively and literally foreclosed."[78] That these alternatives were unsuccessful and—perhaps because of this—forgotten should not be taken as sign that they were unimportant and unworthy subjects of historical inquiry.[79] The British Cartagena that never was, just like the postindependence Cartagena that ended up being, has a history worth uncovering.

NOTES

Introduction: Uncovering Other Possible Worlds

Epigraph: McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xi, emphasis added.

1. "Acta de la legislatura de la provincia de Cartagena," 68, 70–71. For a brief account of "the day *cartageneros* declared themselves subjects of His Britannic Majesty," see Bell Lemus, "Cartagena de Indias británica." For Cartagena's short-lived independence, see Sourdís, *Cartagena de Indias*. For different responses to the French invasion, see Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America*, 51–74; Dym, *From Sovereign Villages*, 65–97; Gutiérrez Ardila, *Un nuevo reino*, 187–233.

2. Bell Lemus, "Cartagena de Indias británica," 64.

3. For contemporary accounts of the siege, see Rodríguez Villa, *El Teniente General*, 2:575–578, 2:585–586, 3:9–11; Ducoudray-Holstein, *Memoirs of Simón Bolívar*, 111–122; Pombo, "Reminiscencias del sitio de Cartagena"; and García del Río, "Página de oro." For more recent analyses, see Earle, *Spain and the Independence*, 61–64, 101–104, 147–154; Cuño Bonito, *El retorno del rey*; and Sourdís, *Cartagena de Indias*, 113–152.

4. Throughout the colonial period and most of the nineteenth century the political entity we now call Colombia was called New Granada. Until 1819 it was known as the Viceroyalty of New Granada. Between 1819 and 1830, following the nation's Fundamental Law of December 17, 1819, "the republics of Venezuela and New Granada are . . . united as one, under the glorious title of Colombia" (Article 1). Since Ecuador was part of the former Viceroyalty of New Granada, the new nation's territory covered the area that now constitutes the republics of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, as well as Panama. Starting in 1826, Colombia—or Gran Colombia, as it has come to be known in the historiography—began to disintegrate until, by the end of 1830, it broke down into three republics: Ecuador, New Granada, and Venezuela. From then, the territory that now constitutes the Republic of Colombia adopted several names, including New Granada (1830), Granadan Confederation (1858), United States of Colombia (1863), and Republic of Colombia (1886). For

the Fundamental Law of 1819 and the many other constitutions that renamed the republic and redrew its map, see Pombo and Guerra, *Constituciones de Colombia*.

5. Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 7.

6. For the editors of a special issue of the *Radical History Review*, "another world *was* possible" in the sense that "historically, the relentless effort to deny the possibility of alternative political and social forms has been matched by determined struggles to recognize and realize such possibilities." Corpis and Fletcher, "Editors' Introduction," 1. My project aligns with this conceptualization in its aim to account for what geographer Edward Soja called, following Marshall Berman, "a collective sense of the 'perils and possibilities' of the contemporary." Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 28; Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 15.

7. The "horizon of expectation," according to historian Reinhart Koselleck, comprises "what is expected of the future" or, formulated otherwise, the potential future outcomes that the historical actors we study believed could result from their present. Koselleck, *Futures Pasts*, 261.

8. Goswami, "Imaginary Futures," 1462. For counterfactuals, possibility, and plausibility in history, see Bunzl, "Counterfactual History"; and Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds*.

9. The term Greater Caribbean has gained traction as a way to think beyond conventional definitions that limit the Caribbean region to the island range stretching from the Bahamas to Trinidad. For works that embrace the term and the wider geographical perspective, see McNeill, *Mosquito Empires*; Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society*; Schwartz, *Sea of Storms*; and Gaspar and Geggus, *A Turbulent Time*. The use of the Spanish term "Gran Caribe" is also becoming more common in the Spanish-language literature. See for example García de León Griego, *El mar de los deseos*; and Pérez Morales, *El gran diablo*.

10. The quotation marks are intended to show that the British Caribbean, the French Caribbean, the Dutch Caribbean, and Danish Saint Thomas were formally British, French, Dutch, and Danish, but their residents could experience them as much more than British, French, and Danish.

11. See Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*; Guterl, *American Mediterranean*; Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*; Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes*, 91–121; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*; Grafenstein, *Nueva España en el Circuncaribe*, 169–195; Souto Mantecón, *Mar abierto*.

12. Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*; Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*.

13. Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*, 17. See also Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*; Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands*; and McGraw, *The Work of Recognition*, 4.

14. Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities*, xvi; Seigel, *Uneven Encounters*, 3. For a similar analysis based on the role of the "extensive circulation of people" and media in the creation of a sort of "intellectual and cultural" cohesiveness that brought together "far-flung locales" throughout the Americas, see Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 5.

15. As chapter 1 shows, empires, including the Spanish one, gradually moved toward free trade, but imperial officials, especially Spanish ones, vociferously complained about contraband trade.

16. Denmark abolished the slave trade in 1803, Britain and the United States in 1807, and Haiti—the first republic to do so—abolished slavery immediately after its independence in 1804. According to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, 47 percent of the total slaves that reached the Americas did so after the outbreak of the American Revolution. The corresponding percentages for Spanish America and Cuba are 60 percent and 98 percent. More surprisingly, despite the fear of slave revolt triggered by the Haitian Revolution, 58 percent of the slaves that reached Spanish America did so after the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in 1791. For Cuba, the percentage is 97 percent. In the struggle between fear and greed inaugurated by the Haitian Revolution, the statistics of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database make a compelling case for the victory of greed. See http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates, accessed March 11, 2016. Percentages calculated by the author.

17. Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity*, 6, 7, 22–30. See also Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*, 17–43; Schmidt-Nowara and Fradera, *Slavery and Antislavery*; Tomich, "The Wealth of Empire."

18. For Massey, "contemporaneous plurality" refers to the "possibility of the existence of multiplicity" or the "simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell." Massey, *For Space*, 9–11. For a study that takes seriously the set of chimeric and unrealistic projects developed by Spanish, British, and French early modern explorers on the best way to reach "the alluring Pacific Ocean," see Mapp, *The Elusive West*, 101–121.

19. "Structures of feelings" and "ways of being in the world" are related terms that refer to the way in which people make sense of their world and experience it. Raymond Williams stresses a distinction between "structures of feeling" and the "more formal concepts of 'world-view' and 'ideology,'" because his term allows him to "go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs." Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132. For "ways of being in the world," see de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

20. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 14. See also Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Massey, *For Space*. For a historical study that takes space seriously and carefully challenges the fixity of "stage spaces" in a Latin American context, see Craib, *Cartographic Mexico*.

21. Massey, *For Space*, 11, 9. The notion of space as a human construction is also a key feature of the way in which Australian historian Greg Dening approached the South Pacific. Dening described his work as "a metaphor for the different ways in which human beings construct their worlds and for the boundaries that they construct between them." Dening, *Islands and Beaches*, 3.

22. For subnational definitions, see Applegate, "A Europe of Regions"; Van Young, "Doing Regional History"; and Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters*. For supranational

definitions, see Goebel, *Overlapping Geographies of Belonging*; Conrad and Duara, *Viewing Regionalisms*; Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*; and Wigen and Lewis, *The Myth of Continents*. For a short introduction to regional definitions, see Young, "Regions."

23. Goebel, *Overlapping Geographies of Belonging*, 45.

24. Studying the subnational regional configuration known as the South East in the United Kingdom, John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Allan Cochrane make the case for the need to understand regions in terms of time-space. For them the question "Where is the south east?" is as relevant as that of "When is the south east?" Allen, Massey, and Cochrane, *Re-Thinking the Region*, 50.

25. Van Young, "Doing Regional History," 172; Goebel, *Overlapping Geographies of Belonging*, 45.

26. Allen, Massey, and Cochrane, *Re-Thinking the Region*; Massey, *For Space*; and de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. See also Horton and Kraftl, *Cultural Geographies*, 181–199.

27. Van Young, "Doing Regional History," 167.

28. Smith and Godlewska, "Introduction," 7–8.

29. Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," 54.

30. Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities," 96–97; Smith and Godlewska, "Introduction," 8. For archival visibility and, most importantly, invisibility, see Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

31. For "imagined communities," see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

32. Cresswell and Merriman, "Introduction," 5. See also Cresswell, *On the Move*; and Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*.

33. Tuan, "Space and Place," 410–411; Gupta, "The Song of the Nonaligned World," 73. Scholarship on relations between different Native American groups and between Native Americans and Europeans in the territory that eventually became the United States has emphasized the role of mobility in the configuration of geographic spaces that did not match European empires' political geographies. See for example Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, xii; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*; and Dubcovsky, "One Hundred Sixty-One Knots."

34. Steinberg, "Of Other Seas," 156.

35. Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*, 83. In his argument against "terracentric" ways of interpreting the world, historian Marcus Rediker critiques "the unspoken proposition that the seas of the world are unreal spaces, voids between the real places, which are landed and national." Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 2.

36. Manning, *Navigating World History*, 155, 170.

37. Instead of framing his account within a "nationalist . . . spatial framing" that foregrounds "conflict over slavery within the boundaries of today's United States" (i.e., perpetuating a narrative that "projects a definition of spaces which *resulted* from the Civil War . . . backward onto its narrative of the description of the conflict over slavery before the war"), Johnson develops "an alternative vision of what 'the South' might [have] looke[d] like," one that "instead of looking at what 'the South'

was leaving" asks "where Southerners . . . thought they were going and how they thought they could pull it off in the first place." Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 15–16. For another analysis that thinks of the U.S. Civil War and U.S. nation building beyond the conventional national framework, see Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 121–138.

38. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*, 9.

39. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds"; Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories."

40. Lewis and Wigen, "A Maritime Response." For their larger critique of world regionalization schemes, see Wigen and Lewis, *The Myth of Continents*.

41. Stoler calls for the need "to account for the *temporary* fixity of terms such as 'white prestige,' 'poor whites,' 'métissage,' and 'bourgeois respectability,' " arguing, following anthropologist Bernard Cohn, that these "summary statements" tend to "preclude rather than promote further historical analysis." Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, 202.

42. José Moya described Latin America as both inaccurate and convenient. Moya, "Introduction," 1. For history becoming teleology, see Craib, *Cartographic Mexico*, 5.

43. For useful summaries of the definitions and debates on the question, see Bassi, "La importancia de ser Caribe"; Grafenstein, *Nueva España en el Circuncaribe*, 21–29; Giovannetti, "Caribbean Studies as Practice."

44. Mintz, "The Caribbean as Socio-Cultural Area," 20; Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 33–81; Knight, *The Caribbean*.

45. Giusti-Cordero, "Beyond Sugar Revolutions"; Abello and Bassi, "Un Caribe."

46. Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society*; Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe*; Schwartz, *Sea of Storms*.

47. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires*, 2.

48. Wigen and Lewis, *The Myth of Continents*, ix.

49. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, paragraph 2.

50. Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 11–31 ("visualizing global space"); Ó Tuathail, "General Introduction," 1 ("future direction" and "coming shape"). For a larger discussion of geopolitics, including a history of the term and the notion of a critical geopolitics, see Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*.

51. Agnew is particularly interested in "the modern geopolitical imagination," which he defines as "the predominant ways world politics have been represented and acted on geographically by both major actors and commentators over the past two centuries." Defining geopolitical imagination in such terms appears to deny powerless actors the ability to have a geopolitical imagination. Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 11.

52. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

53. Gupta, "Song of the Nonaligned World," 73, 64.

54. Chaterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 11. Inviting us "to think ourselves beyond the nation," Appadurai laments the lack of an "idiom . . . to capture the

collective interest of many groups in translocal solidarities, cross-border mobilizations, and postnational identities." Appadurai, "Patriotism and Its Futures," 411, 418. See also Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact*. In fairness to Anderson, his latest book explores precisely these forms of border-crossing solidarities. Anderson, *Under Three Flags*.

55. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

56. Gould and White, *Mental Maps*, 3. For Yi-Fu Tuan, "mental maps are [among other things] imaginary worlds." Tuan, "Images and Mental Maps," 211.

57. White, "What Is Spatial History?"

58. Sellers-García's study of how documents traveled from and to colonial Guatemala is based on the premise that for people living in remote towns in the *audiencia* of Guatemala, as for all people, "conceptions of distance were contextual." These conceptions (and the mental maps directly associated with them) were "created not only by geographical circumstances but also by political, social, economic, and cultural conditions." Sellers-García, *Distance and Documents*, 1–3.

59. For ephemeral states, a term I borrow from Jane Landers, see Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 95–137; Racine, *Francisco de Miranda*, 211–241; Sourdís, *Cartagena de Indias*; and Pérez Morales, *El gran diablo*, 77–112, 145–173. For the hemispheric confederation that Simón Bolívar envisioned in the mid-1820s when he called for a Pan-American meeting of heads of state in Panama, see Lynch, *Simón Bolívar*, 212–217; and Collier, "Nationality, Nationalism, and Supranationalism."

60. Juan García del Río's argument for the need to "adopt the constitutional monarchy, or approach ourselves to this form whenever it becomes possible" is well known among historians of Colombia. See García del Río, "Meditaciones colombianas," 331. For other imaginaries of monarchism, see Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic*, 34–37, 46–49; and Brown, *The Struggle for Power*, 44–49. For standard accounts of the heated debates between federalists and centralists that ran through Colombia's independent history, see Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*; and Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*. For projects to turn northern New Granada into a British colony, see chapter 4.

61. The geo-body of a nation can be understood as the "portion of the earth's surface" that nation occupies. But the geo-body "is not merely space or territory. It is a component of the life of a nation. It is a source of pride, loyalty, love, passion, bias, hatred, reason, unreason." Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, 16–17. An imagined geo-body, thus, would refer to the earth's surface a political entity is envisioned to occupy, to the surface a particular geopolitical project would cover on a map.

62. Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 178. See also Scott, "The Common Wind"; and Bolster, *Black Jacks*.

63. Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*; Helg, *Liberty and Equality*. See also Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery."

64. For sailors, see Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*; Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*; and Scott, "The Common Wind." For interimperial trade, see Armytage, *The Free Port System*; Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution*; Pearce, *Brit-*

ish Trade with Spanish America; Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*; and Prado, *Edge of Empire*.

65. See chapters 3 to 6 for historiographical references on these topics.

66. Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, xvi.

67. Cañizares-Esguerra and Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics," 597. See also Bassi, "Beyond Compartmentalized Atlantics."

68. Greer, "National, Transnational, and Hypernational," 717–718.

69. Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, 242–248.

70. Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, 218 ("global awareness"); Greer, "National, Transnational, and Hypernational," 700 ("brave new borderless world"). For the rise of U.S. historians' global awareness, see Taylor, *American Colonies* and *The Civil War of 1812*; Bender, *A Nation among Nations*; and Gould, *Among the Powers*.

71. For these characterizations of the Atlantic and overviews of the most recent works in Atlantic history, see Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds"; Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories"; Cañizares-Esguerra and Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics"; Sweet, *Domingos Álvares*, 229; Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 10; Gould, *Among the Powers*, 8; Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, xv; Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 2; Bassi, "Beyond Compartmentalized Atlantics."

72. Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*.

73. Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*.

74. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*; Millett, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff*.

75. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 123.

76. Berlin, "From Creole to African," 254. Landers adopts Berlin's term to study "a diverse group" of individuals of African descent united by their "determined quest for freedom," whose lives were characterized by extraordinary social and geographical mobility and marked by the political instability of the Age of Revolutions and the multiple dangers and opportunities it entailed. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 14.

77. For thought-provoking, enlightening, innovative approaches that use food as a key variable to develop cultural geographies that make it possible to see the world otherwise, see Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery*; and Goucher, *Congotay! Congotay!*

78. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico*, 259.

79. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

Chapter 1: Vessels

Epigraph: "From Havana to Portobelo / from Jamaica to Trinidad / roams and roams the ship ship / without captain." Guillén, "Un son para niños antillanos," 145. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

1. Antonio Amar to Miguel Cayetano Soler, December 7, 1806, AGI, Santa Fe, 653, no. 10.

2. While 1814 was a year of war, the war was against internal insurgents and France, not against Britain. In this case, commercial legislation allowing Riohacha