

## Acknowledgments

---

Last spring, a friend summed up fifteen years of conversation about Columbus by pointing to a line spoken by Captain Barbossa, the pirate lord in Disney's film sequel *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007): "For certain, you have to be lost to find a place that can't be found, elseways everyone would know where it was." This bit of roguish wisdom, uttered as Barbossa steers ship and friends over the ocean's edge to survey the Land of the Dead, speaks directly to the saga of Christopher Columbus, whose tenacious disorientation definitively reacquainted the Old World with the Americas. But it also speaks more generally to the surrender of self required by all truly exploratory journeys, personal or collective: we must be willing to lose track of ourselves if we really wish to discover something new about us or about the world. This book has been that sort of journey for me. And the key to finding my way to that new place in myself and the world has been largely to learn to stop for directions from those who happened already to know where they were standing at the time our paths crossed. So it is that fifteen years of being lost to Columbus—since I began grasping for a dissertation topic in graduate school—have earned me many marvelous debts.

This book could simply not have been written without my series editor, Jed Z. Buchwald. A writer's dream, Jed took on this project long before I understood the story it was asking to tell, taught me how to think as a historian, and then freed me to write that story down as it had to be written. His wife, Diana L. Kormos-Buchwald, and his parents, Evie and Bernie Buchwald, wholeheartedly signed up for the ride. Jed's colleagues at the California Institute of Technology have made my summers writing in Pasadena the happiest of my career, especially Mordechai Feingold, whose kindness and serenity are unshakable, and Kristine Haugen and George Pigman III, who devoted eons of precious time to rewriting my barbarous Latin and nonexistent Greek and who answered many a question about the ancient works mentioned here. I am also grateful to Susan Davis, John B. Geasland, the late Sanja Ilic, Dominic Murphy, Carol W. Readhead, and Robert S. Rosenstone for making me feel so welcome at the Institute. Other members of Caltech's community provided precious logistical support for this book, including Robin M. Bonitz, the late Michael Butler, Ginevra Crosignani, Orlando Dungca, Barbara Estrada, Lisa Keppel, Victoria Mason, and Gail Nash.

Learning one's field means, to my mind, growing to observe at least the major constraints that govern any statement one might bring to bear upon it. From this admittedly vague viewpoint, interdisciplinarity entails learning to steer one's course between sets of constraints one can at best come to observe from a somewhat skewed perspective. Without providential coaching from scholars in diverse fields, I could hardly have pieced together a study purporting to outline the complex knowledge system that informed the early transatlantic encounter. Peter Hulme, who wrote one of my favorite books on Caribbean history and literature, encouraged me from the start to think about Columbus's conspicuous southing in terms of that Western malaise we have come to know as tropicality. The late Lily E. Kay rallied for me to work as a historian of science, and she urged me to apply for a fellowship at the Dibner Institute for the History of Science and Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts—a turning point in my career as a scholar. A fine reader for Stanford University Press thoughtfully impressed upon me at the time I worked at the Dibner Institute that my journey with Columbus was not quite over, but that it was well worth faithfully trailing to the end. Helen S. Lang offered priceless insight into Aristotle's philosophy and its assimilation to the Latin West, particularly where his ideas about nature and place are concerned. The late Richard Lemay urged me to think about place at the intersection between Aristotle and astrology. James Muldoon offered invaluable feedback on the legal framework surrounding the relationship between the papacy and infidels. The late Helen Rand

Parish, whose dedication to Bartolomé de las Casas and humanitarianism was maximally contagious, understood long before I did that a learned Las Casas was the treasure map to Columbus's thought. Alison Sandman, for her part, taught me to visualize space as a geographer and cartographer. At the risk of heresy, I should also confess that the author who first opened my eyes to the myriad possibilities of interdisciplinary research was the late Lynn Thorndike, who passed away years before I even learned the alphabet, but whose *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (Columbia University Press, 1923) devoured many hours of guilt-ridden wandering for my doctoral dissertation on Columbus and Pierre d'Ailly.

A number of scholars have kindly read drafts of this book, offering their suggestions and heartiest encouragement: Mario Biagioli, who rooted for my work on scholastic cosmology long before this book was conceived; Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, whose unconventional historiography has shed unprecedented light on the early transatlantic world; Anthony Grafton, who generously blessed this book for publication; Katharine Park, who, understanding more than anyone my mania for Albertus Magnus and the wonders of his world, invited me last spring to conduct new research in the Department of the History of Science at Harvard University; Consuelo Varela, whose rigor as an editor and scholar of the discovery continues to inspire an entire generation of early Americanists; and Margarita Zamora, whose work on the corporate authorship of the *Diario* was fundamental to my own meditation on the dialogue between Las Casas and Columbus. Other colleagues were equally benevolent to various chapters of this book, including Carol Delaney, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, Snait Gissis, Arne Hessenbruch, Frederick Luciani, Victoria Morse, Rosario Ramos, and Benjamin Weiss. In addition, Betsey Barker-Price, Jeffrey E. Brower, Alfonso Gómez-Lobo, David C. Lindberg, John McGinnis, and the late David Woodward answered vital questions in the course of this research. And who could ever find the words to thank this book's godparents among the Hispanists? I shall remain forever grateful to Roberto González Echevarría, E. Michael Gerli, Eduardo González, and Diana de Armas Wilson for voicing their fiercest support for this book at every stage of its production.

Numerous people at the institutions where I have worked since graduate school provided unimaginable support toward the completion of this book. It was at MIT that I came into my own as a scholar. Anyone who has worked at the Institute will understand what a natural playground it is for someone willing to venture beyond the boundaries of his or her field of training. Administrators, colleagues, and friends alike encouraged me from the start to engage in such a miraculous venture, and they have

continued their unflagging support long after my years at the Institute. In the Foreign Languages and Literatures Section, I am particularly grateful to Margery Resnick for so generously sharing her dreams and family with me; to Isabelle de Courtivron and Edward Baron Turk for their loving mentorship and friendship; to Jane Dunphy, Nancy Lowe, and Monica Totten for always listening with their hearts; to Jing Wang for her wise encouragement; to Ellen Crocker, Kurt Fendt, Adriana Gutiérrez, Margarita Groeger, Douglas Morgenstern, and Emma Teng for their warm trust in me as a colleague; and to all staff members of FL&L, who made me proud to work in the section, mainly Cara Cheyette, Pamela Grimes, Lili Kepuska, Shannon McCord, and Andrew Roberts. A number of other colleagues and friends in the School of the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences have continued to rally the cause of this book throughout the years, most especially Suzanne Flynn, Mary Fuller, Jean Jackson, Louis Kampf, and Harriet Ritvo. I hope that the seeds of confidence that MIT planted in me will have borne some fruit with this finished work.

Brown University, and the Department of Hispanic Studies in particular, also helped me bring this work to its conclusion. Within the department, I am uniquely indebted to Antonio Carreño and Stephanie Merrim for their rigor as scholars, for their upright generosity as colleagues, for their dedication as teachers, and for their unfaltering faith in my work. Their example will always remind me that I have much to strive for as an educator. I also thank Beth Bauer, Nidia Schuhmacher, Victoria Smith, and Silvia Sobral, whose discipline, collegiality, and optimism remind me every day that our first and last duty as a department is service to our students. I have also been fortunate to come across two mentors I do not deserve, José Amor y Vázquez and Geoffrey Ribbans, who have never ceased looking out for Hispanic Studies. Needless to say, I shall always miss working with Christopher Conway, whose beatific generosity made my transition to Brown far easier than I could have anticipated. Without exception, our students in Hispanic Studies remind me daily of why I would be willing to embark again a thousand times over on a jittery journey with Columbus. A number of graduates and undergraduates have invited me to come along as they abandon themselves to their own journeys—among them, Dánisa Bonacic, Brian Brewer, Isis Burgos, Noah Gardiner, Chad Leahy, Arturo Márquez, Natalia Matta, Carmen Saucedo, Geoffrey Shullenberger, Jennifer Silverman, Jorge Terukina-Yamauchi, Charlotte Whittle, and Daniella Wittern. Our curator Patricia Figueroa played a crucial role in affording rare materials for my research. And no scholarly work would ever get done without the invisible machinations of those who ensure that departmental life runs smoothly: thank

you, Marie Roderick and John O'Malley! Colleagues and friends across the Brown campus also lent special support and encouragement in the final, anguished phases of this project: Onésimo Almeida, Réda Bensmaïa, Michel-André Bossy, Douglas Cope, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Norman Fiering, James Green, Susan Hirsch, Virginia Krause, Evelyn Lincoln, Catherine Lutz, Tara Nummedal, Amy Remensnyder, Joan Richards, Pierre Saint-Amand, Moshe Sluhovsky, Samuel Streit, Mark Swislocki, Esther Whitfield, and Edward Widmer. Finally, I thank Lynn Carlson in Geological Sciences for her meticulous work as a cartographer retracing Columbus's routes and reconstructing Eratosthenes' globe.

This book was written with financial and logistical support from numerous sources. A Senior Fellowship at the Dibner Institute for the History of Science and Technology (1998–1999) enabled me to change the course of this and future research. An Old Dominion Fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology allowed me to take the necessary time to conduct my work at the Dibner Institute. A Post-doctoral Fellowship of the National Endowment for the Humanities granted in that same year would have allowed me to acquaint myself much earlier than I did with the riches of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. The Class of 1954 Career Development Professorship I received at MIT (1999–2002) provided extraordinary funds that allowed me to travel and acquire the materials for this and future research. Funds in FL&L at MIT and in Hispanic Studies at Brown covered miscellaneous expenses for this book, including translations of Latin sources rendered by Robert Mac Donald and proofreading by Chad Leahy. A Kenyon Humanities Fellowship at Brown (Spring 2004) enabled one of our graduate students, Joanne Kedzierski, to format work in progress and to gather bibliography for future research. An Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award (UTRA) at Brown also afforded me the opportunity to collaborate with Brian Lee, who doctored numerous figures in this book and created stunning illustrations, some of which, alas, could not be included here. A leave granted by Brown last spring gave me the breathing space to meet production deadlines with the MIT Press while proceeding with new research. Lastly, the production of this work was supported in part by the 2007 Premio Grinzane Editoria, awarded to the MIT Press in May 2007 by Premio Grinzane Cavour.

I am most grateful to the Department of the History of Science at Harvard for my time there as a Visiting Researcher, particularly to Mario Biagioli, Janet Browne, Anne Harrington, and Katharine Park, whose conversation is lighting up new horizons for me; to Carole Broadbent, Signe Castro, Judith Lajoie, Dennis Olofson, and Richard Wright

for making my daily work a true joy; to Michael Kelley for his technical help with last-minute illustrations; and to Temitope Oluwaseun Charlton and Justin Merrill Grosslight for sharing with me the excitement of their own projects. I also thank Ann Blair, Galen Brokaw, Joyce Chaplin, Tom Conley, and Diana Sorensen for the faith they have placed in my work.

Most recently, this book has found safe harbor with my colleagues in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures at Princeton University. I particularly thank Marina S. Brownlee and Angel G. Loureiro for their wisdom and encouragement.

In the span of over a decade, I enjoyed the great privilege of working in numerous libraries in Spain and the United States, some of which supplied various figures in this book. I wish to thank the following institutions and individuals: in Madrid, the Archivo de la Casa de Alba (especially José Manuel Calderón), the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the Museo Naval de Madrid (especially María Luisa Martín-Merás), and the Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia. In Seville, the Archivo General de Indias and the Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina (especially Nuria Casquete de Prado Sagrera, director of the Institución Colombina). At Brown University, the John Carter Brown Library (especially Susan Danforth, Lynne A. Harrell, Richard Hurley, Heather Jespersen, Leslie Tobias Olsen, and Richard Ring), the John Hay Library (especially Ann Dodge, William S. Monroe, J. Andrew Moul, and Patricia Sirois), the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, and the Sciences Library. At the California Institute of Technology, Dabney Humanities Library (especially Judith Nollar and Ruth A. Sustaita), the Institute Archives, and Millikan Library (especially Sandy Garstang, Shadye Peyvan, and John Wade). At the Dibner Institute, the Burndy Library. At Harvard University, the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, the Map Collection in Pusey Library, Houghton Library, and Widener Library. At MIT, Rotch Library and Hayden Library (especially Marie Cloutier, Michael Pavelecky, Andrew Thompson, and Theresa A. Tobin). In San Marino, California, the Huntington Library. Other libraries in Europe and the United States facilitated rare materials, granted permission to use other figures in this book, or provided crucial copyright information, including the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence (special thanks to Paola Pirolo), the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal in Lisbon, the British Library in London, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg (special thanks to Ingrid Kassel), the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, and the Map Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. A few publishers have also granted permission to use copyrighted materials for this book: the University of

Chicago Press; M. Moleiro Editor, S.A. in Barcelona (special thanks to Mónica Miró); Testimonio Compañía Editorial in Madrid (special thanks to Enrique Olmos); and Urs Graf Publishing Company in Dietikon-Zurich.

The MIT Press enthusiastically embraced the publication of this book. No effort was spared to give my work its best fighting chance, and I particularly cherish the support given by my acquisitions editor, Marguerite Avery, by the director of marketing and promotions, Gita Manaktala, by my production editor, Matthew Abbate, by my designer, Erin Hasley, and by Cristina Sanmartín, who appreciates the many detours it has taken to complete this journey. I also thank Thomas Kozachek for taming this book's prose.

Apologies are also due readers who may be insiders in fields with which I can claim at most a nodding acquaintance. I hope that the honest urgency with which I have written this story will somewhat attenuate the sins of fact and method often incurred by work between disciplines. I also apologize to the contributing authors of the splendid third volume of the History of Cartography, *Cartography in the European Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), edited by the late David Woodward, which only reached my hands as this book was being sent to the typesetter. This has prevented me from doing full justice to studies that will take years to assimilate properly and that will remain a standard reference for all readers concerned with the Age of Exploration. Publication schedules have also prevented me from supplying one of the authors in that volume, Victoria Morse, with the title of the present book, which she thoughtfully cites by its provisional title, *The Machine of the World: Scholastic Cosmography and the Place of Native Peoples in the Early Caribbean Colonial Encounter*.

Needless to say, I also owe this book to more distant mentors whose lessons I have never forgotten. They include Jay Cantor, John T. Irwin, Patricia Khoury, Richard Macksey, Teresa Méndez-Faith, Nancy J. Peláez, Juan Manuel Pombo, John Russell-Wood, Harry Sieber, Robert Szulkin, Francis Wehri, O.S.B., Geoffrey Wolff, and Luis E. Yglesias.

Without my friends, this book's journey would have been intolerable. Livia Polanyi knows everything there is to know about total surrender not only to one's dreams but also to the dreams of one's friends. She knew that my soul rode on this book, and she never once stopped talking to Columbus on the trail for that soul. I am grateful to Martin van den Berg, my godson Mishka Kornai, and Ellen Zweig for joining us through the years in this conversation. In deed and in word, Silvia Unzueta has reminded me every day for twenty-five years that true courage is always heeding your conscience, no matter your fear and no matter the consequences. From María Antonia Garcés, I learned early on in graduate school that one's vocation is a marvelous palliative for travel's solitude.

And from Verónica Salles-Reese, the muse and sister who first suggested that I work on Columbus, I learned that unswerving loyalty to one's family and friends can be that solitude's actual cure. I owe the completion of my doctoral dissertation to Verónica and to our mutual friend Jorge Olivares. Jane Rabb, who urged on me the importance of following work routines, has provided plenty of chocolate and sympathy at her house in Cambridge to last us a lifetime. Brenda and Tanya Athanus, for their part, taught me along the way that hard traveling does not preclude good living. And my friend Maureen Costello blesses me every day with the constancy of a love that reaches far beyond life and loving. John P. Manis patiently endured a decade of foundering and discovery on my part. Sam Schweber, who has frequently advanced the cause of this book, is finally persuading me that there is some justice in the world, if only we care to look for it in the right places. And I shall never forget that Urmila Seshagiri was willing to shower endless love and intelligence on the most difficult pages of this book. I am also grateful to friends who have shared, at one time or another, the joys and sadnesses of this process: Rolena Adorno, the late David Adorno, Inés Alcalde, Ignacio Atienza, Nicolás Bermúdez, Catalina Berti, Michael A. Carver and his daughter Ellie, Peter Dunn, Ricardo Gaviria, Peter Halstad, James Iffland, Juan Carlos Isaza, Aldo Mazzucchelli, Sarita Nori, Helena Otero, Alan Reese, María V. Rivera, María Helena Rueda, Juanita Sanz de Santamaría, Libby Schweber, Yvonne Senouf, Mallikarjun Shankar, Amy Storrow, Edwin Tait, Angela Uribe, Maureen Whalen, and Felipe Zuleta.

And, finally, what would become of us travelers if we did not have those back home to count the days since we embarked on life's adventure? This book is dedicated to my family back in the tropics of our beloved Colombia, especially to my mother Tatiana Gómez Durán, who has always known to follow her dreams to the end of the world; to my stepfather Alvaro Cabrera Galvis, who has made room in his own dreams to ride with us all to world's end; to my brother Santiago Cabrera Gómez, who is bravely testing the waters of his own magical musing; to my clairvoyant sister Natalia, who has taught me that one need not leave one's home to have traveled the world or invented new ones; and to my brother-in-law José Matiz Filella, who shares my sister's wisdom. I also thank my father, Nicolás Wey Vall-Serra, his wife Florencia, and my siblings Paul, Jack, and Helen Christine for waiting at the other end of this journey. Last but not least, I offer this book in gratitude to my grandmother Lucía Durán Bravo. Without her liberating understanding of comedy's marriage to tragedy, life itself would be unthinkable.



Introduction:  
Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies

*Latitudes, however, are more significant for the diversity of lands  
than longitudes.*

Averroës, on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*