

**Four Theses on the Real and Imaginary British Empire,
1697-1829**

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Abstract:	<p>The vexed entanglement of colonial power's cultural and material manifestations has been an important topic in anti-colonial thinking. I tentatively term this the problem of relating the imperial imaginary and imperial reality. This essay focuses on the imaginary and real geographies of the eighteenth-century British maritime empire, using digital methods (custom named entity recognition) and mapping to compare place names mentioned in maritime fiction and nonfiction to the movements of British ships. In Edward Said's terms, "structures of reference" are used to see the "structures of attitude" underpinning the material power of an increasingly global empire. I present four speculative theses on the convergences and divergences between the imaginary empire of texts and real empire of ships: the centrality of Britain in both; a shared colonial geography of fungibility; the imaginary's erasure of environmental and bodily restraints; and the imaginary empire's anticipation of, even preparation for, future real imperial domination.</p>

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In struggles against colonialism, one major contribution of humanists has been understanding the entanglement of colonial power's cultural and material manifestations. The focus has been, and must be, not on splitting the two, but on figuring out how the stuff of imperial imagination—culture, symbols, art, language, tropes—and of imperial reality—conquest, territory, enslavement, exploitation—mutually define each other.¹ I term this the problem of the imperial imaginary and imperial reality. While I explain these terms more below, I offer first that their very inadequacy reminds us they cannot be disentangled: they invite us to counter that the imaginary isn't necessarily imaginary and reality not necessarily real. The variations of imperial imaginaries and realities with time, location, historical situation, and critical conjuncture (Scott 11, 55) make it hard to approach them conceptually. But we could do worse than to begin with Edward Said's appositely-titled *Culture and Imperialism*, which insistently connects the two yet hesitates to define their exact relation: "We are not yet at the stage where we can say whether these globally integral structures [of attitude and reference] are preparations for imperial control and conquest, or whether they accompany such enterprises, or whether in some reflective or careless way they are a result of empire" (53). While we cannot resolve Said's uncertainties on this point in general, my goal here is instead to address a pivotal case, the expanding geography of the maritime eighteenth-century British empire, with a novel approach, comparing counts of place names in a mid-size corpus selected from the period's maritime literature to thousands of ships' itineraries.

Along with insights on the relations of imaginary and real empire to nationalism, racial capitalism, and the marine environment, this method suggests a stronger line on Said's question: the geography of imaginary empire, if not definitively "prepar[ing] for imperial control and conquest," anticipates the geography of later real empire. As in Said's title and his discussion of decolonization (209), culture leads imperialism, at least in this case. While my conclusion dwells on how this finding

emboldens Said's more tenuous position, I do not frame this essay as a conclusive quantitative demonstration of his question. Embracing "pluralism" in visualizing and analyzing textual data (D'Ignazio and Klein 128-30), I spend much of it instead on the plethora of hypotheses and questions that emerge from my methods. Just as Said writes that he thinks of his own reading of "domestic imperialist culture" in *Mansfield Park* as "completing or complementing others, not discounting or displacing them," counting place names is an option for "complementing"—and, as it turns out, amplifying—his and others' interpretations of imperial geography (95). Even as the limited size of my corpus makes it possible to attend to individual texts, as Said calls for, my method does break with his insistence on "reading...in full" (95) to find "discriminating and subtle" articulations of empire (76). Instead, I study the unsubtle power of written place names as a bridge between real and imperial geography, showing how their patterns of usage chart imperial spaces. I pose this study as an example of how digital methods, even at smaller scales than past work, can enrich human reading, providing alternative ways to formulate and corroborate speculations about how empire works: another beginning, not one end.

Eighteenth-century British maritime empire is an important case if we want "to explain the arrangements of international power and revenue extraction that characterized modern empires, and to do so (in part) with a view to explain the continuing overlaps between imperialism and neo imperialism" (Kaul, "Postcolonial" 326). It was notable for its global reach: consolidating control of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, expanding into the Pacific, and anticipating the post-World War II American empire's grip on the world's oceans (Campling and Colás 104-5). It encompassed the deadliest years of the transatlantic slave trade; the British East India Company's subjugation of the Indian subcontinent; and the European charting and colonization of Oceania and Australia. It also marked the heyday of maritime literature, situated at the nexus of imperial imaginaries and realities. John Hawkesworth, editor and hack "moral writer," received £6,000 (over £1,000,000 today) to

prepare an account of Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* voyage—the most paid for a British book in the entire century—then used £2,000 to buy a directorship of the East India Company (Edwards 84-5). The genre birthed enduring imperial topoi: Robinson Crusoe's island, the Caribbean pirate, the Pacific paradise. The literature of the sea also shaped the European novel, as Margaret Cohen has argued, underlining how that literary form which also went on to colonize the planet owes much to this chapter of maritime British empire. Imperial reality and fantasy were inextricable in this empire, most notably in the South Sea Bubble of 1719-20, a “founding moment in ‘racial capitalism’ in the English-speaking world” (Moore 2), when British dreams of South American slave trading wealth, fueled by voyage narratives (Lamb, *Preserving* 51), lead to a dizzying stock market rise and collapse.

Geography, in turn, was and is a crucial prism for understanding this empire. British imperial self-representations foregrounded spatial sprawl across the seas. Indeed, the popularity of the Mercator projection, still a fixture of classroom walls—which shrinks the tropics and makes the North dwarf the South—stems from this period, as mariners increasingly recognized its usefulness in sailing (Monmonier 122). British readers sought out books enabling armchair travel overseas. Daniel Defoe's *The Compleat English Gentleman* valorizes such reading as a route to imperial mastery: “[H]e [the reader] may make himself master of the geography of the Universe in the maps, atlases [sic], and measurements of our mathematicians....He may make all distant places near to him in his reviewing the voiajes of those that saw them” (225). Anne M. Thell reads this as Defoe's *ars poetica*, his writing seeking “to make more of the planet—especially those potentially lucrative regions of the South Seas and South America that so attracted his interest—available for assessment, speculation, and future action” (115). Said, centuries later, also reads geographically to see how imperial culture collaborates with material domination: he interprets *Mansfield Park* as encoding a British imperial “map of the world” which served to “validate...distant imperial rule” (81-2). Focusing on the relation of real and imaginary imperial geographies in the maritime British empire of the eighteenth

century—since both Defoe and Said, to diametrically opposed ends, center geography—provides a way of seeing how “structures of attitude and reference” link with “imperial control and conquest.”

I propose that one way to delineate the imaginary geography of this phase of British empire is by counting mentions of place names. Tracking mentions of locations in the texts of maritime literature can help us trace imaginary geography: structures of reference can show structures of attitude. But I reject the usual trade of close reading one text for computationally analyzing many texts, instead showing that such quantitative methods need not be bound to huge corpora. For theoretical and technical reasons, I use a hand-selected corpus of maritime literature that enables analytically-rich comparative claims about imperial imagination and reality. My theses are thus backed not by massive bodies of text but by a tight focus on a major tool of imaginary geography, the place name, which itself couples texts to real imperial geographies. As for real geography, we cannot just turn to the period “maps” and “atlases” of Defoe, themselves fantasies of uniform imperial sovereignty (Benton 2). A better option is examining records of ships’ movements, the maritime empire’s own working representations of its lifelines. Such an approach draws from Elaine Freedgood and Cannon Schmitt’s “denotative reading.” A place name like “Madras” does not just connote a signification but denotes a real navigational location, especially in colonial writing, and thus place names provide one way to relate imaginary and real imperial geographies: comparing places mentioned in maritime literature to the recorded ports and paths of British ships.

Corpora and methods

My corpus is made up of imperial self-representations, how the maritime British empire of this period represented itself to itself in both real and imaginary terms. The emphasis on self-representation draws from Said’s study of Orientalism, with the clarification that the “real” geography here is not like the “brute reality” of the Orient that Said carefully brackets off, but instead consists of the British empire’s own records of its real overseas power (Said, *Orientalism* 5,

21). The underlying goal is examining the power that shaped these representations of the world, using them not as windows on the planet they claim to show but rather as indices of how the “matrix of domination” behind these representations framed that planet, practically and imaginatively (D’Ignazio and Klein 47). My primary method to compare imaginary and real geographies is to generate maps of the movements of British vessels (the real empire) and the distribution of place names in maritime literature (the imaginary empire). Those maps suggest four theses on how imaginary and real empire converge and diverge. Before getting to those maps and associated theses, I address where and how we can see the real empire; the imaginary; and the methodological perils of mapmaking.

Two databases offer self-representations of the real maritime empire. The *Climatological Database for the World’s Oceans, 1750-1850* (CLIWOC) includes ships’ logbooks from the East India Company and Royal Navy. Though assembled by climatologists and oceanographers to study weather at sea, and therefore not necessarily a cross-section of all British voyages, CLIWOC provides a vantage on the official empire of the British state and its monopolies. Likely the most organized and comprehensive collection of digitized British logbooks from this period, it contains 670 logbooks from British ships that together record 94,859 days at sea from 1750 to 1829. The second database, *Slave Voyages*, documents the itineraries of (almost exclusively) transatlantic slave trading voyages. It offers disturbing coverage of the British slave trade, claiming to account for “more than 95 percent of all voyages that left British ports,” a total of 12,014 voyages, including some illegal voyages after abolition (Eltis). As such, *Slave Voyages* shows a less-official, though very much state-protected, side of real empire.

Aligning such databases with real empire (and even using them) may seem, at best, uncritical; at worst, it rehearses colonial violence. *Slave Voyages* is grounded in the perspective of slave traders, “the lists, ledgers, and commodities of slavery” (McKittrick, “Mathematics” 22). Katherine

McKittrick, discussing a two-minute animation based on the database, describes its compressed display of “centuries of racial violence” that “disappear[s] black life” as “nauseating” (McKittrick, *Science* 180-1). The same can apply to the maps below. But they do not attempt to “map the black diaspora,” McKittrick’s critique of *Slave Voyages*, but to map the “racial violence” of British empire. These maps of *Slave Voyages* trace how British slave traders “disappear[ed] black life” into the geographic data of shipping itineraries, a self-representation of the British empire’s anti-Black violence: they document how the British empire charted its real geographic practices.² I frame the logbooks of *CLIWOC*, too, as self-representations of real colonial violence. At a planetary scale, *CLIWOC* records how the ships of the British empire represented their forays in their own working geography, the destinations and coordinates of the logbook. At the ship’s scale, the regular writing of the logbook was a disciplinary ritual of violent shipboard “hydrarchy” (especially in the Royal Navy), where latitude and longitude calculations were written alongside the number of lashes sailors received (Linebaugh and Rediker 160; compare McKittrick, “Mathematics Black Life” 22). Finally, as the theses below explain, these databases show how empire maneuvered around material environmental-bodily pressures, like scurvy, that were often bypassed in the imaginary empire of the period.

As for the imaginary empire, we can view its geography by tracking the place names mentioned in period texts. While counting place names to index geographic imaginaries is an established digital humanities method, especially in the work of Matthew Wilkens and Elizabeth Evans, I break from them in using a smaller, hand-selected corpus rather than the massive corpora generally associated with digital scholarship. Wilkens poses corpus size as the *raison d’être* of such projects: “We now have methods by which to work with large bodies of text and to extract at least some types of spatial information from them,” with size taking precedence over “spatial information” and justifying shortcomings of resolution (Wilkens 804). But a smaller corpus can

prove just as capacious analytically because it enables greater attention to individual texts, exceptional cases, and finer-grained “spatial information,” while still giving a sense of larger geographic patterns in the real-imaginary relation—especially when that limited corpus had an outside presence in libraries and imaginaries. A smaller corpus also enables a finer-tuned model to identify place names, a necessity for the obscurities and archaisms of eighteenth-century maritime literature. Digital methods should not be bound to huge scales; instead, this essay exemplifies how they can illuminate smaller corpora, complementing, not replacing, human reading.³

That said, a smaller corpus further begs the question of how much counting place names can really tell us, especially as it runs directly counter to Said’s insistence on reading texts “in full.” Beyond once again emphasizing that this digital method of reading works to complement “fuller” readings like Said’s, I want to pinpoint why patterns of place names merit specific focus. Methodologically, place names are a major intersection of imagined and real geographic representations, where a text’s imaginary grips to a real geographic order (Anderson and Loxley 58). Said’s own more subtle analysis of the spatial orders in *Mansfield Park* is anchored in the name “Antigua,” which glues the novel’s movements to transatlantic slavery and empire (85). Materially, place names themselves—their creation, enshrinement, and repetition—are a primary tool in establishing colonial power over space, especially “governmentality,” by “denoting” places with a stable written referent, making and controlling space through the very act of naming before we even consider the colonial significations of these names (Rose-Redwood et al. 460-2). Synthesizing these points in a study of real and imaginary geographies in maritime British empire, where names circulated among Navy logbooks, Lloyd’s Register and Parliamentary records of the slave trade, nonfiction, and fiction in irregular forms, further shows how the denotative colonial power of place names is not wholly a top-down, state-led imposition, but instead arises from a more complex interchange of the state, market, navigators, and authors (and shows the ambiguities of those

categories). Place names, in short, are a nexus where real and imaginary geographies shape each other. Their sustained, specific enumeration as an index of those geographies' relations can complement more holistic readings of colonial geography.

In selecting a corpus of texts to map the British imperial imaginary, I again follow the principle of examining imperial self-representations to understand how imperial power imagined its world, and so I begin with the hugely popular body of period maritime nonfiction.⁴ I chose representatives of major subgenres that would set up comparative mappings: not “maritime literature in one corpus,” but a sketch of landmarks in the maritime literary field. First are book-length voyage narratives, the tentpoles of the maritime imperial imaginary (recall Hawkesworth's advance); next, the voyage collections that attempted to organize this sprawling field; and, finally, pirate literature, a much-read counterpoint to official maritime imaginaries. While focusing on published texts whose circulation gave them a larger role in shaping the imperial imaginary, I include some unpublished journals from Cook's first voyage that were Hawkesworth's sources, helping to compare the imaginaries of sea-level practitioners to those of armchair imperialists.

Any examination of the maritime imperial imaginary in its self-representations would be incomplete without sea fiction. Differentiating maritime fiction and nonfiction is notoriously difficult, as nonfictional voyages “were broadly regarded as lies” (Lamb, *Preserving* 6). The editor of the putatively nonfictional *General History of the Pyrates* admits that the accounts of the female pirates Mary Read and Anne Bonny have “a little the Air of a *Novel*” (6). I nonetheless keep nonfiction separate because, as the analysis of *Pirates* below shows, some of their geographies aligned with real empire's in ways no novels did. To decide which fictions to include, I followed Cohen's lead and worked outwards from a central text, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Cohen argues *Crusoe* forged “a new poetics of adventure out of the mariner's craft” which “quickly inspired other writers” to make a “subgenre of sea adventure fiction” (Cohen 60). My corpus similarly conceptualizes sea fiction as a

Crusoe-spurred development within the larger arena of maritime literature, beginning with *Crusoe* and its successors, then reworking other genres like pirate and voyage narratives. It is fair to object that I overrepresent Defoe, who takes up roughly half the corpus's fiction, attenuating my claims about the imperial imaginary writ large. However, my seeming Defoe-centrism is more a symptom of *Crusoe*-centrism, befitting that text's importance in eighteenth-century sea fiction and in British imperial imaginaries, as attested by Said's interlocking claims for *Crusoe*'s premiere importance in the history of fiction and the history of empire (Said 69-70). A different project, more like *Culture and Imperialism*, on how imaginary imperial geographies found their way into less putatively imperialist genres, like domestic fiction, would devote less to Defoe. But my method here, which binds my real and imaginary sources and methods together as self-representations, leads us to sea fiction, where *Crusoe*'s shadow hangs heavy.⁵

The resulting corpus (table 1) is not very large in terms of the number of titles (18) or word count (about 6 million). That limited size is not entirely a drawback. It blocks a tendency to approach digital corpora as representative wholes. Instead, I place a "scholarly editio[n]" of the "literary system" of maritime literature alongside a cross-section of imperial reality to investigate, not adjudicate, how the two relate (Bode 98). Further, while limited in terms of number of titles, this corpus is overwhelming in terms of editions, translations, and cultural impact. *Crusoe* alone was a "steady bestseller" throughout the eighteenth century (St Clair 119) that has been reissued, translated, or adapted at least 700 times (Watt 95).

Finally, the timespans of *CLIWOC* (1750-1829) and *Slave Voyages* (ending in 1809 with the last slave ship that sailed under a British flag)⁶ offer an analytic possibility relative to this corpus. After 30 years as a leading genre, new sea fiction became rare during the decades between Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748) and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pilot* (1824) (Cohen 100).⁷ The 1719-48 flow and subsequent ebb of sea fiction enables a rough experiment on

the chronological relationships between the imaginary empire of novels and real empire. *CLIWOC* picks up when sea fiction recedes, and I included only post-1750 voyages in *Slave Voyages* (leaving 7,169 voyages), helping us see whether this slice of imaginary empire mimics, ignores, or anticipates the real. All three relations turn out to hold. Fictional empire shares real empire's focus on Britain (albeit a nationalist focus on "England") and a fungible model of colonial geography; it bypasses bodily and environmental restraints; and it prepares the fringes of empire for imagined future conquest. However, anything approaching a complete study of these relations would need to consider ship movements prior to 1719 and during the 1719-48 window. These theses on imaginary-real relations remain suggestive.

Table 1

Corpus

Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719) • Defoe, <i>Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719) • William Rufus Chetwood, <i>Richard Falconer</i> (1719)⁸ • Defoe, <i>Captain Singleton</i> (1720) • Defoe (?),⁹ <i>A New Voyage Round the World, by a Course Never Sailed Before</i> (1725) • Jonathan Swift, <i>Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World (Gulliver's Travels)</i> (1726) • Tobias Smollett, <i>Roderick Random</i> (1748)
Nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Dampier, <i>A New Voyage Round the World</i> (1697)¹⁰ • Captain Charles Johnson (?),¹¹ <i>A General History of the Pyrates</i> (1724) • John Green (editor), <i>New General Collection of Voyages</i> (1744)¹² • George Anson (edited by Richard Walter), <i>A Voyage Round the World</i> (1748)¹³ • Tobias Smollett (editor) (?), <i>A Compendium of Authentic and Entertaining Voyages</i> (1756) • John Hawkesworth, <i>An Account of the Voyages for Making Discoveries...in the Southern Hemisphere</i> (1773) • Sydney Parkinson, <i>A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas</i> (1773)¹⁴ • Abbé Raynal and John Justamond (translator), <i>A Philosophical and Political History...of the Europeans in the East and West Indies</i> (1776)¹⁵
Journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Banks, journal of <i>Endeavour</i> voyage and description of places (1768-71) • Captain James Cook, journal of <i>Endeavour</i> voyage and description of places (1768-71)¹⁶

To find and count place names in these texts, I trained a custom Stanford Named Entity Recognition (NER) model (Finkel et al.),¹⁷ then manually associated each name it found with a latitude, longitude, and other features (land or sea, specific or vague).¹⁸ This model identified 37,652 references to 1,189 unique locations denoted by 2,916 names. My method maps discourse rather than story, unlike, say, mapping the plots of Jane Austen's novels (Moretti 12, 19, 21, 23). For example, although most of *Crusoe's* story unfolds on an island in the Orinoco River (a specific sea place), the discourse barely mentions this river, but it mentions England (a vague land place) more than any other. *Crusoe*, in other words, has a story largely set in the Americas but an England-centric discourse—like all the corpus's novels, in fact—and I map the latter.

Finally, the maps themselves and their epistemological dangers. Cartography is “particularly fraught terrain,” Elizabeth Maddock Dillon argues, because its illusion of “unmediated vision” is “deeply allied with the colonization of the Americas and the exploitation of American land, indigenous peoples, and African labor,” and thus maps of empire often reenact the “coloniality of representation” (143). Dillon's warning is doubly relevant here because the maps of imaginary empire show counts of place names pulled from texts, a God's eye view of an algorithm's reading of quantifiable geographic references; and because the maps of real empire, especially those from the *Slave Voyages* database, are grounded in colonial violence, as discussed above. Vincent Brown mulled similar problems in his digitized mapping of the 1760-61 Jamaican slave revolts: “[C]artography presumes the natural existence of points on a grid much as history naturalizes the timeline, though these are ultimately folkways for representing space and time that have more in common with slaveholders' epistemes than with those of their slaves” (137-8). Brown's invocation of “slaveholders' epistemes” echoes Defoe's advice that “the maps, atlases, and measurements of our mathematicians” help the British man make “himself master of the geography of the Universe,” dramatizing how digital cartographies share the tools of imperial power and knowledge. But Brown

holds that mapping can be worth the risk when the novel “design” of maps like his enables a more creative renarration than that provided by archival sources like Defoe’s “atlases”: “Rather than representing reified artifacts, historical visualizations can narrate a humanistic interpretation” (139). I attempt such a “humanistic interpretation” by critically reading these maps, not just setting them out as the truth about British empire. Interactive versions of them, inspired by Brown’s cartographic animations, are also available online for recreating, remixing, and remodeling, although even the static visual maps here can help renarrate the geographic structure of the imperial archive’s imaginary. By reflecting the “measurements of our mathematicians” back on Defoe and his ilk, mapping self-representations of empire to chart *its* real and imaginary geographies, I hope to short-circuit the imperial archive’s epistemic grip on geography.

As an initial illustration of how this method helps to see imaginary-real geographic relations, consider the maps of *CLIWOC* (fig. 1), *Slave Voyages* (fig. 2), and the place names in *Pyrates* (fig. 3) and sea fiction (fig. 4). The locations are sized by their “counts,” combining all names for the location (e.g., “Brazils” and “Brazil”) (table 2). In *CLIWOC*’s case, the count equals the total number of days travelling to or from a location across all voyages; in *Slave Voyages*, the number of voyages to or from it; and in the texts, the number of references. The largest node of each map has the same size, regardless of the absolute count, showing the relative geographic importance of its places. Note finally that the Mercator projection distorts the nodes’ size, making equatorial places wrongly seem less important.

Table 2

Top Ten Locations in *CLIWOC*, *Slave Voyages*, *Pyrates*, and Sea Fiction

CLIWOC		Slave Voyages		Johnson (?), <i>Pyrates</i>		Sea Fiction	
SPITHEAD	17003	Liverpool	4378	Jamaica	86	England	312
DOWNS	12463	Kingston	1179	England	85	Europe	110

MADRAS	9449	London (1122), Londontowne (1)	1123	Bristol	41	London	105
ST HELENA	8363	Africa., port unspecified	1029	Africa (38); London (38)	38	China	82
PLYMOUTH	7314	Bristol	885	Virginia	35	Jamaica (62); America (62); Brazil (22), Brazils (40)	62
TABLE BAY	7194	Bonny	874	Madagascar	26	Spain (49), Old Spain (4)	53
BOMBAY	5917	Barbados, port unspecified	695	New-England	25	East Indies (45), East-India (1)	46
JAVA HEAD	5704	Jamaica, port unspecified	634	New-York (22); Newfoundland (22)	22	France	45
PORTSMOUTH	4841	Grenada, port unspecified	529	Carolina	20	South Seas (30), South Sea (7), South Sea , ¹⁹ (2), South-Sea (1); Madagascar (40)	40
UK	4744	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin (24), West Central Africa and St. Helena, port unspecified (486)	510	Cape Corso (4), Cape _ Corso (8), Cape-Corso (2), Cape _ Corso-Castle (4), Cape-Corso-Castle (1)	19	Africa (39); Japan (39)	39

How do the *CLIWOC* and *Slave Voyages* maps of real empire correspond to these texts' visions of imaginary empire? Unexpectedly, a combination of the *CLIWOC* and *Slave Voyages* maps would not be dissimilar to that of *Pirates*. There is relatively more of British North America and less of the mid-Atlantic islands and South Asia in *Pirates* (although, as discussed below, its India-China ratio reflects the real empire more than most texts). But a Caribbean centered on Jamaica matches *Slave Voyages* and (less so) *CLIWOC*; an Africa consisting mostly of "Africa" plus some locations along the western coast fits *Slave Voyages*; some mentions of Brazil but few elsewhere in South America

meshes with *CLIWOC*; and a thoroughly Atlantic world extending into the Indian Ocean, but not the Pacific, corresponds with both. Fictional geography resembles the real British empire far less; I consider its divergences below. That any text should approximate the real empire surprises—let alone *Pyrates*, which admits its affinities with novels. The comparison here demonstrates that maritime fiction and nonfiction *are* different, at least geographically, with nonfiction not so fantastic as alleged. It also shows that, rather than collapse all the texts together, we should proceed cautiously in mapping imaginary empire across texts. We must pose maps not as distillations of literary history—“imaginary empire in one map”—but as complementary texts themselves, hermeneutic accretions that offer possible vantages on the imperial imaginary-real relationship. Multiple maps of real and imaginary geographies underline the multiple interpretive possibilities of this method (D’Ignazio and Klein 130). The result of these readings are four initial theses: speculative patterns in the convergences and divergences of imaginary and real geographies in the maritime British empire of the eighteenth century, culminating in a bolder claim for how the imaginary shapes the real.

Convergence I: The maritime empire has multiple layers centered on the imperial core: environmental, commercial, national, and navigational. Case study: England

Britain, specifically England, is unsurprisingly the center of the two visions of the real British empire and, with few exceptions, its imaginaries. But while the imperial center remains within England, it does shift across these maps, with four centers corresponding to distinct layers of maritime empire: environmental in *CLIWOC* (fig. 5), commercial in *Slave Voyages* (fig. 6), national in sea fiction (fig. 7), and navigational in mariner’s journals (fig. 8). (See figures 1-4 for the legend to these zoomed-in maps.)

Table 3

Environmental, Commercial, National, and Navigational Imperial Cores: Top Five British Locations

CLIWOC	Slave Voyages	Sea Fiction	Cook’s Journal
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SPITHEAD	17003	Liverpool	4378	England	312	Greenwich (242), Greenwich (2), Greenwich Bearing (31), Greenw (3), Greenwh (52)	330
DOWNS	12463	London	1123	London	105	England	17
PLYMOUTH	7314	Bristol	885	Bristol (19), Brifiol (3)	22	London	9
PORTSMOUTH	4841	Lancaster	123	Scotland	15	Deptford	2
UK	4744	Whitehaven	58	Bridewell	8		

In *CLIWOC*, England is primarily sheltered near-shore roadsteads. Spithead was by the “naval establishments of Portsmouth” and only open to southeast wind (Bartholomew 736). The Downs, near the mouth of the Thames, has high sand bars that protect against North Sea storms (Harding 61-4). Note that both places blur first and second nature, sand bars, navy works, rivers, and cities. *CLIWOC*'s England shows the environmental affordances at the bedrock of maritime empire.

For *Slave Voyages*, in contrast, England is mostly one city, Liverpool. This city on the English main lurks behind the imperial roadsteads of *CLIWOC*, its plunder protected by the British navy—a British Atlantic premonition of the American Pacific empire's capital, Los Angeles, and its perimeter of military bases mapped by Edward Soja (225-7). Unlike the more dispersed environmental geography of *CLIWOC*, the commercial geography of the slave trade clustered at a single port city, “a capital of the long eighteenth century” (Baucom 9). The concentration of commercial empire in transatlantic slavery, violent accumulation flowing towards one point, distinguishes it not only locationally but structurally from *CLIWOC*'s environmental geography.

Sea fiction's imaginary empire breaks from both these visions of the real empire to foreground a nationalist geography. The most common place name in sea fiction by a wide margin is "England" (table 2), imagining a specifically English nation. Austen, too, limited her novels to England, "a much smaller space than the United Kingdom" (Moretti 13), but the novel-nation bond here predates Austen, occurs in a very different genre, and elevates the name "England" itself. The only sea fictions to put another place name over "England" are *Roderick Random*, by our lone Scot, which foregrounds "London" (yet still mentions "England" more than "Scotland"), and Defoe's *Further Adventures*, which barely prefers "China" (table 4). In table 4, "England" even becomes the geographic marker of novel-ness: these texts share little geographically except "England"-centrism (table 4).²⁰

Table 4

England and Other Places: Top Five Locations in Sea Fictions

Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>		Defoe, <i>Further Adventures</i>		Chetwood, <i>Richard Falconer</i>		Defoe, <i>Captain Singleton</i>		Defoe, <i>New Voyage</i>		Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>		Smollett, <i>Roderick Random</i>	
England	42	China	45	England	69	England	35	England	46	England; Europe	44	London	46
Brazil (7), Brazils (29)	36	England	44	Jamaica	39	Madagascar	25	America	33	Blefuscus	30	England	29
Lisbon	17	Japan	14	Bristol (13), Brifiol (3)	16	Africa	23	South Seas (26), South Sea (4), South Sea, ²¹ (2)	32	Lilliput	17	Scotland	13
London; Africa	11	Bengal; East Indies; Europe	13	Isle of Cuba (1), Cuba island (1), Cuba (10), Island of Cuba (2)	14	China	16	Spain (23), Old Spain (3)	26	Luggnagg	15	Jamaica; France	12

Guinea	10	Muscovy (4), Moscow (7)	11	London (12); Spain (11), Old Spain (1)	12	Malabar; Europe	13	Peru	23	Japan	14	Europe	11
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While a novel-nation connection is not surprising, the strength of this signal is noteworthy, especially in sea fiction. While we may have known since at least Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* that novel and nation generally go hand-in-hand, identifying a text as a British novel by simply checking if "England" is the most common place name is a strikingly direct link. Digital methods here are not just telling us what we already know. Furthermore, this link is counterintuitive for sea fiction. We might expect it to deemphasize the nation given the "rambling disposition" of the maritime picaresque that "pulls it outward," a centrifugalism borne out in mentions of non-British places (table 4) (Cohen 103). Their stories also unfold outside the nation's borders. *Captain Singleton* departs England after a few pages, stops back for less than four sentences, and returns for the final two sentences—yet mentions "England" more than anywhere else. That sea fiction still foregrounds "England" suggests that British sea fiction's national stories of maritime adventure remain within the novel's nationalist discourse.

Not all maritime texts participated in this nationalist imaginary. One of the strangest maps is from Cook's *Endeavour* journal, a practicing mariner's view of the empire that deemphasizes the nation. This map contains a giant node over Greenwich with the rest of the world barely registering: Greenwich occurs 330 times and all non-Greenwich places combined 624 times, meaning Greenwich accounts for about 35% of all references. These references come exclusively from longitude readings, revealing a navigational empire of abstract meridians and points, not nations. Greenwich's literal centrality still indexes the British empire's power, as the state-backed Royal Observatory there was the reference point for the lunar distance tables used to calculate longitude

(Sobel and Andrewes 197-9). However, Greenwich itself lacks significance for Cook, since other places can function as bearings: “[T]akeing several observations of the Sun and Moon the mean result of which gave $207^{\circ}..56'$ West Longitude from the Meridion of Greenwich, from these observations the Longitude of the Ship at Noon was $207^{\circ}..58'$ and by the Log $208^{\circ}..20'$ the difference being only $22'$ and this error may as well lay in the one as the other, our Latitude at noon was $39^{\circ}..36'$ So and Longde made from Cape Farewell $22^{\circ}..22'$ Wt” (April 17 1770). The multiplicity of bearings here—the lunar distance longitude from Greenwich, the same based on logbook runs, and the longitude from Cape Farewell (in Aotearoa/New Zealand) computed with the run from there—shows that Cook has no special faith in the astronomical measurement centered on the Royal Observatory (“this error may as well lay in the one as the other”), cross-validating the readings because the ship’s survival depends on an accurate positional fix. Mixing a standardized reference point, Greenwich, with one chosen by the mariner, Cape Farewell, speaks to a larger balance in the mariner’s craft between technical procedures and necessary improvisation, or, as Cohen terms them, “Protocol” and “Jury-Rigging” (21, 30). The two capacities work in concert just as multiple bearings here corroborate the ship’s position.

But one reference system is enough for the armchair sailor. Hawkesworth’s revision of Cook omits “Greenwich” in the lunar distance longitudes and cuts out such corroborating bearings, casting England as the unquestioned center of the world. Hawkesworth’s simplified bearings show a split between the geographies of the practicing mariner, who needs specific points of relative reference because they cannot take their bearings for granted, and the armchair sailor, who welcomes an absolute England-centered geography like sea fiction’s.

Convergence II: The empire seeks fungible geographies of power. Case study: Africa and China

One key site of overlap between the real and imaginary empires is Africa, where *Slave Voyages* (fig. 9) and many texts, both nonfictional (fig. 10, fig. 11) and fictional (fig. 12), prefer vague, large-scale African locations over specific places. That similarity evinces an underlying imperial geography of fungibility—opportunistic violence, flexible trading, slippery signification—which was also a model for imagined future conquest, particularly of China.

Table 5

Vagueness and Fungibility: Top Five Locations in Africa

Slave Voyages		Green, <i>Collection</i>		Johnson (?), <i>Pirates</i>		Defoe, <i>Captain Singleton</i>	
Africa., port unspecified	1029	Guinea (976), Guinea Coast (5), Guineai (4), Guina (5), Gabon (4)	994	Africa	38	Madagascar	25
Bonny	874	Africa (427), Inland Parts of Africa (9)	436	Madagascar	26	Africa	23
Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin (24), West Central Africa and St. Helena, port unspecified (486)	510	Gambra (56), Gambia (329), River Gambra (5), River Gambia, or Gambia (2), Ganmbra (10)	402	Cape Corso (4), Cape _ Corso (8), Cape-Corso (2), Cape _ Corso-Castle (4), Cape-Corso-Castle (1)	19	Cape de Bona Speranza (4), Cape of Good Hope (8)	12
Windward Coast, port unspecified (340), Windward Coast (Nunez - Assini) (99)	439	Congo (353), Congo River (6), River Zaire (24), Zayri (10)	393	Cape _ Lopez (11), Cape Lopez (1)	12	Congo	7

Calabar	421	River Sanaga (22), Sanaga (335)	357	Gambia; St. Thome (1), Island of St. _ Thomas (4), St. _ Thomas (3), St. _ Thome (3)	11	Angola; Mozambique; Rio Grande ²²	6
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All these maps emphasize the vague place “Africa,” along with terms like “Guinea” or “Windward Coast” that denote vast zones rather than particular places. We might expect the imaginary empire in text, especially fiction, to deploy vague place names in order to other, exoticize, and despecify. But that *Slave Voyages*’s top place of embarkation is also “Africa (port unspecified)” —for slave traders would just write “Africa” on official papers, making it a functional place in the transatlantic slave trade (Eltis)—evinces a more pernicious vagueness uniting real and imaginary empires.

If we align the “Africa (port unspecified)” of *Slave Voyages*, the “Guinea” and “Africa” of Green, and the “Africa” of *Pyrates* and Defoe, we see an underlying connection: fungibility.²³ The concept from Black studies derives from Hortense Spillers’s work on the representational flexibility of Black bodies under white domination (though Spillers does not use the term “fungibility”), especially how bodies “become a territory of cultural and political maneuver” (67). Subsequent studies have discussed how fungibility turns Black bodies into exchangeable (economic, discursive, symbolic) commodities (Hartman, *Scenes*), linking this abstracting movement to global capitalism past and present (Winnubst). Tiffany Lethabo King argues further that fungibility is a fundamentally spatial practice: “Under slavery and conquest...Blackness is the raw dimensionality (symbol, matter, kinetic energy) used to make space” (“Labor”, 1028-9). Empire, armed with spatial fungibility, produces spaces through the “maneuver” of territorial conquest, bodily enslavement, and symbolization thereof. The hollow circles marking vague African places in these maps index the open space of fungibility in imperial geography.

Fungibility binds the real and imaginary empires because it fuses economic and representational flexibility. Slave traders ruthlessly exploited the “flexible commercial system[s]” of west Africa, where they used numerous intermediaries for buying enslaved people (Getz 81) and sites of sale large and small (Baucom 11-4). Those roving maneuvers resemble how textual place names created open spaces for unverifiable adventures. *Captain Singleton’s* lack of specific African places frees Defoe to fill this “Africa” with ferocious beasts, vast deserts, and gold deposits. Slave traders’ many sites of embarkation further parallel how vague names like “Africa” can link specific place names: “[They] sail’d for the Main of Africa, and put in at a little Place called Delagoa, near the River de Spiritu Sancto, on the Coast of Monomotapa” (Johnson and Defoe 132). Fungibility is how empire navigated, materially and symbolically.

Nor was fungibility limited to Africa. The British imperial imaginary dreamt especially of making China, the most mentioned non-European place in sea fiction (table 2), a fungible space. Green’s collection exemplifies the Africa-China fungibility link: it mentions “China” 1,479 times, the most of any place, followed by variants on “Guinea” (table 6); and the map of Green’s collection in China (fig. 13) resembles that of Africa (fig. 10), with a vague “China” dominating specific places. Historically, eighteenth-century British merchants were frustrated by the Chinese government’s control of trade, which limited all European trade to strict terms at a single port, Canton (modern-day Guangzhou). Although this Canton trade was lucrative for European merchants, they chafed at the restrictions of the so-called “golden ghetto” (Downs 4). The British geographic imaginary, in contrast, envisioned a Chinese space as fungible as Africa’s, where a single vague place name would enable flexible (one-sided) commerce and representation.

Table 6

Imagining a Fungible China: Top Five Locations in Green's *New General Collection*

China (1420), Clina (7), CHINA , ²⁴ (21), China (12), Ckina (16), Cathay (3)	1479
Guinea (976), Guinea Coast (5), Guineai (4), Guina (5), Gabon (4)	994
Europe (442), Eu rope (11), Europa (4)	457
England (448), Englandyy (3)	451
Africa (427), Inland Parts of Africa (9)	436

The difference from Africa is that the maps of the real empire do not share this China focus—*CLIWOC* shows British ships barely passing the straits of Malacca (fig. 1)—implying that British armchair imperialists imagined a future Chinese geography that would recreate Africa's present.²⁵ Their dreams of “China (port unspecified)” basically came to pass with post-Opium War “unequal treaties” that opened China to “free trade,” making its coast a jumble of European concessions and treaty ports (Bracken 168). The final thesis considers such imaginary anticipations of real empire at length. For now, the fungible imaginary geography of China, absent real imperial British power there, points to how fungibility is a portable framework for colonial spatial power.

Divergence I: The imaginary empire bypasses environmental restraint. Case study: the mid-Atlantic

While the first two theses highlighted convergences between imaginary and real British maritime imperial geographies, the last two consider divergences: the absence of environmental restraint in and the anticipatory character of the imaginary empire.

CLIWOC accords great weight to mid-Atlantic islands (fig. 14). St. Helena is the biggest non-British destination after Madras (Chennai) (table 2). Madeira, despite not being a British possession (albeit occupied by Britain during the Napoleonic wars within the *CLIWOC* timespan), is a bigger destination (3908) than anywhere in the Americas (i.e., Barbados at 3560). One methodological reason for their prominence is their small size, which means that all voyages there list the same destination, concentrating their footprint. Contrast how the Cape of Good Hope's multiple destinations—Table Bay (7194), Simon's Bay (2001), and the Cape itself (1732)—dilute its size; consolidating them would make it the biggest non-British location in *CLIWOC*. Still, *CLIWOC*'s emphasis on the mid-Atlantic islands signals their significance in the real British empire.

That importance emerged from the interplay between their environmental uniqueness and mariners' bodily limits. St. Helena was important in imperial geography not because of its trading opportunities, but because it sits atop a hotspot in the Earth's mantle that made a landmass large enough to collect fresh rainwater, support plants and animals, and provide safe harbors (O'Connor and le Roex). Of course, St. Helena entered the Anthropocene with colonization, and its environmental affordances, like Spithead and the Downs, fuse first and second nature: species introduced by Europeans, notably the goats brought by the Portuguese in 1502, have displaced endemic vegetation and animals, and the forests are greatly reduced (Gosse 4, 18, 125, 128). These islands' fresh food was vital because preserved food caused scurvy after about three months (Lamb, *Scurvy* 6), making them and the Cape common stops on the important Britain-South Asia route (fig. 1). (As such, their size here also indexes the outsize importance of South Asia in the real empire's geography, as the next thesis discusses.) Although scurvy's exact etiology, vitamin C deficiency, was unknown until the twentieth century, mariners had long recognized that fresh food prevented and cured it (29). The mid-Atlantic islands were thus geographical anti-scorbutics whose environmental features ameliorated the deficiencies of empire's working bodies at sea. Their importance in

CLIWOC shows how empire maneuvered around environmental-physiological constraints (101-2 and 64-108 *passim*), using mid-Atlantic footholds to extend its reach.

But the mid-Atlantic islands are notably absent from the imaginary empire of sea fiction (fig. 15). St. Helena gets 6 mentions across all sea fiction; Madeira, 5; the Canary Islands, 9. Nonfictional texts also downplay them, if less dramatically (fig. 16).²⁶ The marginal mid-Atlantic of texts suggests a crucial difference between imaginary and real imperial geography: the imaginary appears largely indifferent to the spatial-bodily challenges the marine environment posed. That finding is somewhat surprising. While some scholars have bemoaned the preponderant modern indifference to marine materiality, even in contemporary transnational histories that center oceans (Steinberg), and argued that accounts of scurvy-stricken voyages refused to acknowledge the disease just as historians sidestep its epistemological challenges (Lamb, *Scurvy* 30-1), others have recovered in maritime literature a “fluid network of human and nonhuman actants” (Duckert 56) and an ethos of craft that coupled the human mind and body to environmental dangers and affordances (Cohen 20-1). I stress, then, that this is a finding about geography, not necessarily the whole maritime imaginary. While body-environment relations are important in maritime literature, these maps hint that they are explored more through episodes in distant places (e.g., Cook’s encounter with the Great Barrier Reef [Cohen 15-58]) rather than the pit stops undergirding survival at sea. The erasure of the mid-Atlantic implies that empire imagined the sea as a scalar expander, while maps of imperial reality show a Janus-faced maritime space that expands while imposing limits. The imaginary empire’s lack of environmental spatial restraint corresponds with Schmitt’s reading of *Heart of Darkness* as a critique of unrestrained “imperial acquisitiveness,” symbolized by “Kurtz as an all-consuming mouth” (25), and contrasted with the “restraint” imposed by the tide framing the narrative (22-9). But the disjunction between *CLIWOC* and these textual maps in the mid-Atlantic qualifies Schmitt’s theory

of imperial unrestraint: real empire did shape itself around environmental constraints, but imaginary empire acknowledged them far less, instead envisioning a geography of limitless expansion.

Divergence II: The imaginary empire is far ahead of the real empire. Case study: the Indian and Atlantic Oceans vs the Pacific

The imaginary empire's lack of environmental restraint accords with its general neglect of real imperial territories in favor of the unconquered fringe. The imaginary empire pushes beyond, and sometimes even anticipates, the real empire, suggesting imaginary attention may prepare for real conquest. Specifically, the imaginary empire fixates more on lands bordering the Pacific Ocean (China, western South America) than those on the Indian and Atlantic (colonies in South Asia and the Caribbean), despite the real empire's near-complete absence from the former and concentration in the latter.

The most remarkable discrepancy of this study is the marginal position of South Asia in both fictional and nonfictional imaginary geographies despite its centrality in the *CLIWOC* map of real empire. Across all sea fiction, India, the most mentioned place in South Asia, occurs only 15 times, half as often as Blefuscu (from *Gulliver's Travels*). China, as noted above, is the most discussed place outside of Europe, with 82 mentions. In the case of fiction, we could perhaps blame this imbalance on the corpus, namely Defoe's "obsession" with criticizing China (Markley 192), even if *Singleton* is the only fiction here whose most mentioned non-British place is in the Indian Ocean (Madagascar) (table 4). It is unclear, too, why Defoe's opposition to the "East India trade" writ large, which included a campaign to ban "callicoes" from South Asia, should in his fiction revolve so much more around East Asia (Starr 438). Besides, the same pattern holds in the compendia of voyages: Green mentions India 271 times, but China 1,479; Smollett's *Compendium* has a closer but still imbalanced proportion (56 to 84). Two exceptions are Hawkesworth's edition of the *Endeavour* voyage (29 to 12) and Cook's own journal (9 to 2), but those texts obviously contain many more references to Pacific

places, and the immense popularity of Hawkesworth's text itself demonstrates British imaginary interest in the Pacific.

That interest was wholly out of proportion to real British geography. When we turn to the Navy and East India Company voyages documented by *CLIWOC*, the most common destination outside of Britain is Madras (Chennai) (9,449), with Bombay (Mumbai) not far behind (5,917), while the biggest Chinese location, Canton (Guangzhou), barely registers in comparison (650). In *CLIWOC*, real British ships cover the Indian Ocean but hardly make it east of Java Head, let alone to China (fig. 17), unlike imaginary geographies that bypass South Asia for China and the Pacific (fig. 18, fig. 19). The texts systematically minimize the importance of South Asia in the British empire. The lack of imaginary attention to the Indian Ocean and subcontinent compared to the Pacific and especially China—in a period when Britain consolidated power over India, its largest imperial possession, and disfigured the Indian Ocean world by militarizing the seas (Ghosh 288)—is a striking case of how the imaginary empire pushed far beyond the real.

Why does imperial writing rush ahead to the Pacific? Said argues that novels “fill gaps in an incomplete world” and thus fulfill a “desire” to “modif[y] reality—as if from the beginning,” which perhaps manifests in a geographic orientation towards empire's open edges (*Beginnings* 82). But South Asian places are scarce in nonfiction, too. The underlying issue might be that, as Conrad puts it, “[t]he conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much” (107). Places where empire is establishing itself, like eighteenth-century South Asia, are not friendly imaginary harbors for armchair sailors. It is more tasteful, following Simon Gikandi, to ignore the material base of colonial wealth, and instead imagine the frontiers of empire in innocent narratives of exploration as “anti-conquest” (Pratt 37-66).

Another possible reason, since Europeans had not charted much of the Pacific at this time, might be the “powerful pleasure” of “curiosity,” “adventure,” and “danger and destruction” at the “Edge of knowledge,” as Cohen terms it (52). But a wrinkle is that the places of interest in British fiction are defined in *national* terms as the edge of the British empire, not necessarily European knowledge, for the British imperial imaginary also fixed on places controlled by other empires. British interest in the western coast of the Americas, dating back at least to Francis Drake’s attacks in the 1570s, demonstrates this nationalist acquisitiveness (Andrews). *CLIWOC* shows no more than four British landings on this coast, but it is disproportionately important in sea fiction—Peru gets 28 mentions, Chile 19, and Lima 19. Many of these come in *A New Voyage Round the World, by A Course Never Sailed Before* (fig. 20), a text that “at times seems to have little more purpose than to promote one of Defoe’s²⁷ favorite projects, creating an English colony on the tip of South America” (Todd viii). Note, too, the popularity of the nonfictional 1744 account of Anson’s voyage to attack Spanish colonies there (fig. 21). Such attention to western South America shows the imaginary British empire’s omnivorous spatial appetite, which overleaps the real not just by pushing European empire across the planet but by pushing into the spheres of other European powers, ultimately seeking (in line with the first thesis) British aggrandizement relative to national rivals.

Raynal’s *History* can corroborate this nation-empire relationship by providing a view of the British empire from France, as the British empire shows up more in this French text, evincing a transnational pattern of imperial covetousness. Focusing on South Asia (fig. 22), where the East India Company had largely seized French holdings before Raynal’s 1776 publication, partially supports the pattern: Raynal mentions India 226 times, against 159 times for China. Further, Raynal’s most mentioned South Asian locations are Bengal (65), the longest-colonized British territory, followed by Malabar (61) and Coromandel (61). Smollett’s *Compendium*, one of the few texts to focus much on South Asia (fig. 23), somewhat inverts Raynal, with more interest in Malabar (39)

than Bengal (9), though Smollett shows little interest in French possessions in Coromandel (10). But that Raynal's text should mention India the most of any in the corpus, and specifically Bengal, hints that the nationalist ambitions of imaginary empire extended to Britain's main imperial rival.

We arrive at a provocative thesis. At least in the case of British maritime literature, the imperial imaginary paved the way for real future conquest while avoiding the existing real empire. The basic structure of attitude we can surmise from the structure of reference in these texts is an emphasis on the imperial core and far fringes with a gap in the middle. Said claimed that it is an oversimplification to argue that earlier literature "caused" later imperialism, but these maps suggest we can risk being that forceful, amplifying Said's point by complementing his subtle reading with an unsubtle enumeration (*Culture* 81). British imaginary interest in China is the strongest evidence of imperial imagination as real preparation, since it anticipated future domination which took the same geographic form as that imaginary vision, namely the fungible trade zone. In South America, although a projected British settler colony did not materialize and there were not "military footholds and formal territory," Britain later exerted an "informal empire" that foreshadowed twentieth-century neocolonialism (Reeder 6-8), the imaginary again anticipating the real.

I must qualify this thesis. First, it demands a longer and more detailed chronological survey of British imaginary and real empire to see whether, for example, there was an earlier wave of imaginary interest in South Asia. Second, fiction is not created ex nihilo but pulls from and transforms existing texts. The fictionalized western South America of *New Voyage Round the World, By a Course Never Sailed Before* ostentatiously drew on Dampier's nonfictional *New Voyage Round the World*, for example. Comparing them illuminates how fictional imaginary geography modifies the nonfictional to anticipate real empire. The fiction simplifies Dampier's geography by using fewer and vaguer place names: accounting for length, Dampier mentions places 2.6 times more frequently, but vague places only 40% as often. Contrast Dampier's tangle of specific references (fig. 24) to the

fiction's sparser vague references which also ignore British colonies like Jamaica (fig. 20). These revisions suggest that fiction anticipated real empire by refining nonfiction, a honing of the imaginary to *focus on new regions* of potential conquest. Fictional geography is not the sole preparation for real imperial maneuver, but these comparisons point to its importance in steering the imaginary and ultimately the real empire.

The implications of the imaginary empire zooming ahead of the real, casting its eyes to the Pacific when the British were still consolidating power over the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, deserve an essay of their own reflecting on its significance for the relationship between material realities and textual imaginaries. Contrast Mary Louise Pratt's "strong methodological assumption" for using literature to study history: "[I]mportant historical transitions alter the way people write, because they alter people's experiences and the way people imagine, feel and think about the world they live in. The shifts in writing, then, will tell you something about the nature of the changes" (4). Arguments for the opposite view, that literature shapes future reality, generally concede that literature is also mimetic, as in Said's hesitation about "preparation[n] for imperial control and conquest." Said does strongly argue, however, that "culture is in advance of politics, military history, or economic process" when it comes to *decolonization*: "The slow and often bitterly disputed recovery of geographical territory which is at the heart of decolonization is preceded—as empire had been—by the charting of cultural territory" (*Culture* 200, 209). These maps affirm that the "charting of cultural territory" preceded colonization and not just decolonization, emboldening Said's claim. Culture, at least on the real and imaginary seas of the British empire, was the front line of imperialism.

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For Peer Review

¹ Because the imaginary-real relationship rightly animates so much scholarship resisting colonialism, a comprehensive overview is impossible. I draw most on Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, but foundational texts could include Fanon; Gilroy, *Atlantic*; Hulme; McKittrick, *Grounds*; Morrison; Spivak; and wa'Thiongo. Some notable recent work on this topic includes: Aboul-Ela; Cheng; Elias; Gikandi; Lamb, *Scurry*; Lowe; McKittrick, *Science*; Mignolo; Sharpe; So; and Taylor.

² For a non-exhaustive overview of historians' debates on *Slave Voyages*, see Kelley.

³ Other digital humanists who have also turned away from the massive corpus include Algee-Hewitt and McGurl; Booth; Gavin and Gidal; and Manshel.

⁴ My project opens onto the question of how other representations of empire might be embedded in different geographic imaginaries, specifically how later anticolonial texts might deploy place names differently. While beyond the conceptual purview of this article, I did check the outputs of my named entity recognition (NER) model for some of these writings. (See below for an explanation of that model.) Some were strikingly similar, at least in their distribution, to my colonial corpus. M. NourbeSe Philips's *Zong!*, for example, mentions England the most (12 mentions) and Jamaica second (8), a pattern similar to William Rufus Chetwood's *Richard Falconer* (see table 4)—although many of these place names in *Zong!* come in the reprinted court case, not the poem cycle. That distinction argues, not surprisingly, that such texts have a “black sense of place” (McKittrick, *Science* 106-8) away from my colonial corpus. What does surprise is that this sense of place can still be registered, in a very different way, by NER. For example, while the most common place name it detects in Dionne Brand's *Map to the Door of No Return* is “Africa” (35 mentions), the runner-up is “No Return” (28 mentions)—a place name, perhaps, but one quite unlike the place names detected in British maritime literature that easily map onto cartographic points, suggesting a future version of this project that could use NER as a path beyond colonial naming norms and cartography.

⁵ Alternative corpora of eighteenth-century British empire would shift this project's emphases, whether by incorporating other period genres, such as sentimental literature, abolitionist texts, slave narratives (Festa), poetry (Kaul, *Poems*), and theater (Orr), or ranging across a variety of writing concerned with empire (Aravamudan; Carroll; Kaul, *Eighteenth-Century*). Beyond the interest of seeing how imperial imaginaries were contested and fractured across genres, such analogous corpora would open up more questions about empire's gendered geographies, given the largely masculine stories of maritime writing. More lacunae emerge when we consider how this project's basic framework would radically change if it prioritized not self-representations of empire but representations positioned against or outside it (compare note 4), making delimiters like “British,” “1697-1829,” and “writing” collapse. Studies of the diasporic Indian Ocean world (Aiyar; C. Anderson; Desai; Ghosh; Gopinath; Hofmeyr, *Dockside* and “Universalizing”; Jaffer; Lahiri; Varisco), the transpacific (DeLoughrey, “Critical” and *Routes*; Hoskins and Nguyen; Jetñil-Kijiner et al.; Jones and Wanhalla; Lee et al.; Looser; Shigematsu and Camacho; Suzuki; Yoneyama), and the Black Atlantic (Arabindan-Kesson; Barson; Figueroa-Vásquez; Gilroy, “Blues”; Hall; Hartman, “Venus”; Johnson; King, *Shoals*; McKittrick, *Grounds*; Sharpe) work “outside colonial scripts” (McKittrick, *Science* 52) very literally, challenging the spatiotemporal bounds and textuality of colonial archives to trace the mobile solidarities of people surviving and struggling against maritime empire. Rather than follow these counterhistories and -theories, this project instead stresses the terms of imperial geography—ledgers, coordinates, enumerated place names—to dissect empire's persistent operations.

⁶ The British slave trade did not end then, as slavers kept sailing under false flags after the trade's 1807 abolition, though “these cases probably account for less than 1 percent of the ships included in the [*Slave Voyages*] data set” (Eltis).

⁷ Cohen observes that the paucity of sea adventure fiction during this period “is a puzzle, and it may be that there are collections I have overlooked” (100). In assembling a corpus for this project, I searched through Gale's *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* for literature mentioning “voyage” and “sea” and found the same gap, substantiating Cohen's account.

⁸ *Richard Falconer* is forgotten today, but the six editions recorded in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* attest to its popularity.

⁹ The attribution of this text to Defoe is highly dubious (Marshall 222-8).

¹⁰ A voyage narrative that set off “the flood-tide of eighteenth-century voyage literature” (Edwards 17).

¹¹ While “Johnson” was once cast as Defoe's pseudonym, there is no external evidence for Defoe's authorship of *Pirates*; it is inconsistent with his other works on piracy (Furbank and Owens 100-21); and there is more evidence for another author, Nathaniel Mist (Bialuschewski).

¹² Also known as the Astley collection, after the publisher, and the basis of Abbé Prevost's collection of voyages.

¹³ A much-anticipated and widely read voyage narrative, running to five editions within a year and quickly translated into German, French, Dutch, and Russian (Williams 302).

¹⁴ Parkinson was Banks's artist for the voyage who did not survive it. His brother, Stanfield, prepared his journal and published it separately.

¹⁵ The first translation into English of Abbé Raynal's widely read *Histoire des deux Indes* was a popular proto-encyclopedia combining voyages, history, and philosophical essays (Kaufman 50, 122) that helps us map the nation-empire link (see the fourth thesis).

¹⁶ Digitized versions of the journals were taken from the National Library of Australia's *South Seas* website ("South Seas").

¹⁷ I made a training set from the corpus, as explained in the Stanford NER CRF FAQ, to detect place names in the texts. This new "place name" entity was not trained upon any of Stanford NER's existing classes. In a test set of sentences with place names, my model caught 69% of the place names (recall) and 83% of its guesses were correct (precision). These figures are significantly better than the default Stanford NER's performance on the test set, slightly better than Wilkens's on his corpus of American fiction from 1851-75, and good given that human annotators only agree on identifying named locations 80 to 90% of the time (Leidner 10, quoted in Wilkens 840). More technical information, instructions for replication, and all relevant files can be found at: <https://github.com/mapping-british-empire/MappingBritishEmpire>.

¹⁸ Locations were pulled from *CLIWOC* and *Slave Voyages* directly, and from the texts using Stanford NER as explained in note 16. I differentiated specific land and sea locations (cities, islands, capes, provinces; bays, straits, rivers) from vague locations (nations, empires, continents, archipelagos; oceans, seas) according to my judgment of what might be specific enough to be navigationally useful to a mariner. I manually associated locations with latitudes and longitudes in a main list, with vague locations roughly centered on the place.

¹⁹ This comma is part of the name as recognized by NER.

²⁰ Exploratory analyses of novels outside the corpus also show the novel-"England" link. The model finds that the top place names in Chetwood's *The Voyages and Adventures of Robert Boyle* are England (30), Spain (25), and Lima (20), looking ahead to the Pacific fixation of the fourth thesis; in Peter Longueville's *The English Hermit, or the Unparallell'd and Surprising Adventures of One Philip Quarll*, London (15), England (14), and Mexico (9); and in Penelope Aubin's less Anglocentric but still nation-oriented *The Strange Adventures of Count de Vinevil*, France (17), Constantinople (8), and Venice (4).

²¹ This comma is part of the name as recognized by Stanford NER.

²² Refers to the Rio Grande de Buba in present-day Guinea-Bissau; no text in the corpus refers to the better-known Rio Grande in present-day Mexico and the United States.

²³ My explication of fungibility follows King's.

²⁴ This comma is part of the name as recognized by NER.

²⁵ The near-absence of Chinese locations in *CLIWOC* was cause for concern. I searched for mentions of Chinese trading ports in Adam Matthew's database of East India Company archives in the same period but found surprisingly few mentions of them there as well. So while a database of other British merchant ship movements would likely reveal more trade with China, it seems the comparative paucity of British ships east of Malacca before 1829 may not be far off the historical mark.

²⁶ The Cape of Good Hope region, which also served an anti-scorbutic function, is similarly marginal in the imaginary empire, meriting only 22 mentions.

²⁷ See note 8.

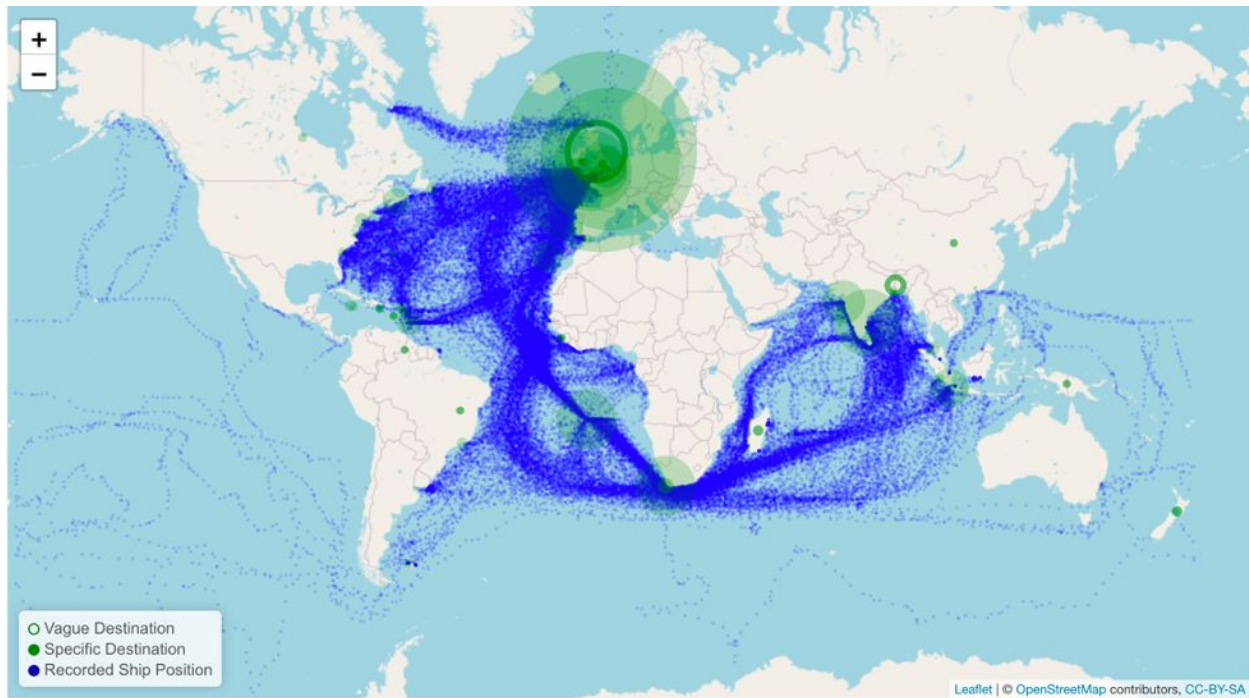


Fig. 1. *CLIWOC* (British, 1750-1829)



Fig. 2. *Slave Voyages* (British, post-1750)



Fig. 3. *A General History of the Pyrates*

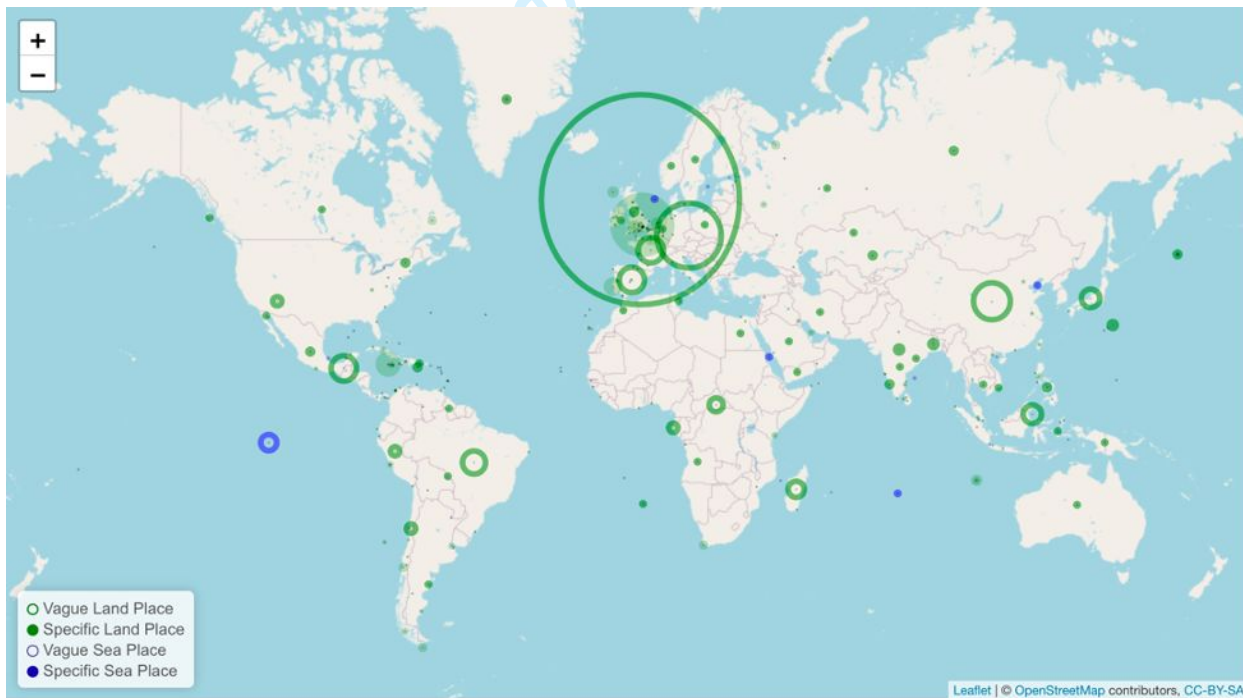


Fig. 4. Sea Fiction (Defoe, Chetwood, Swift, Smollett)

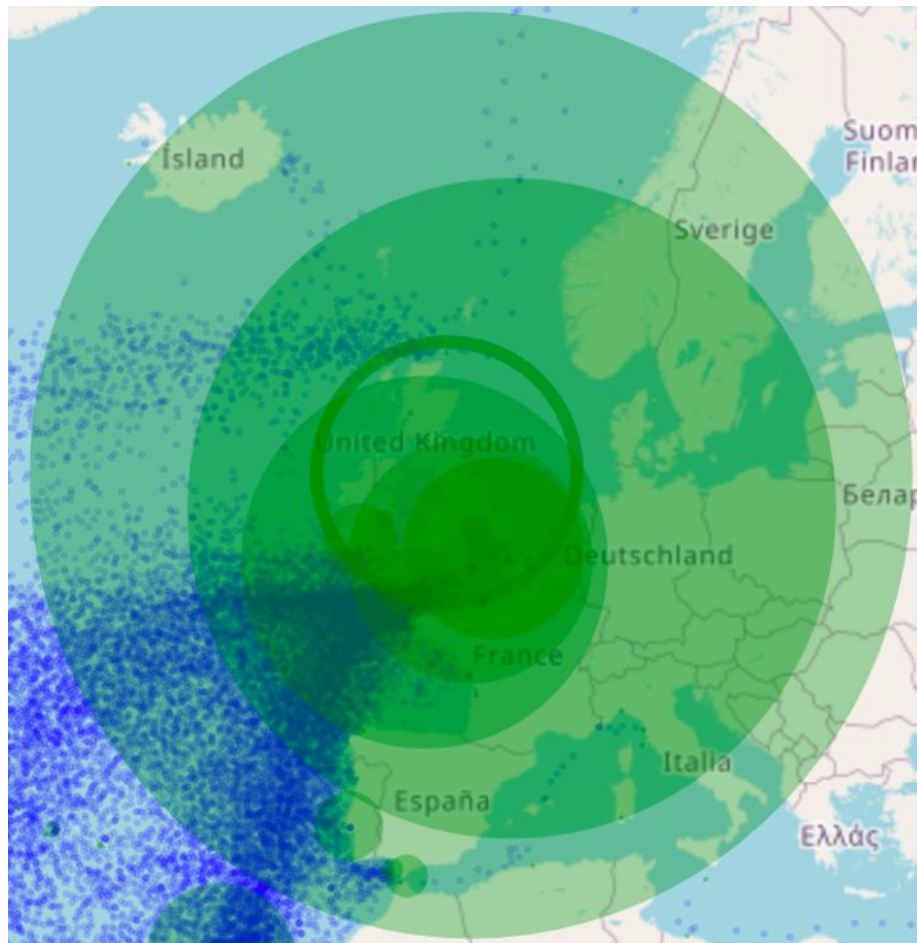


Fig. 5. Britain in *CLIWOC*

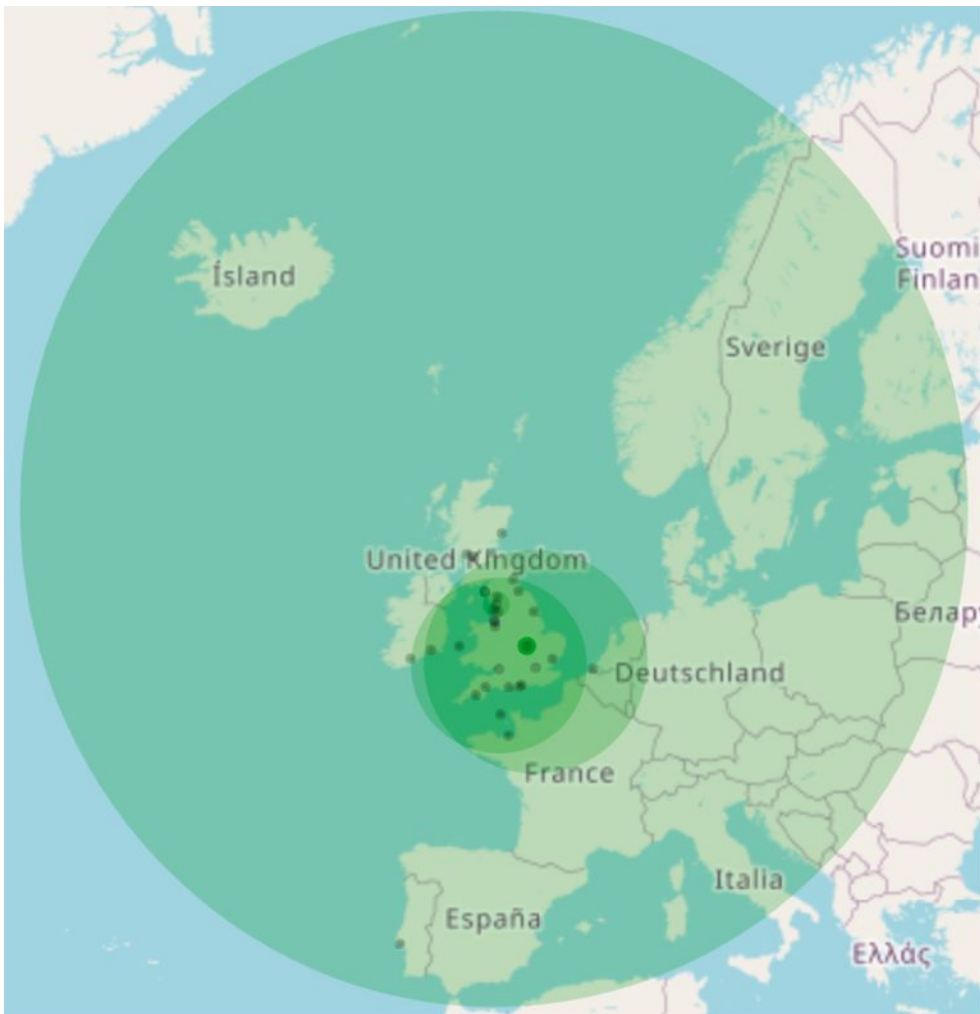


Fig. 6. Britain in *Slave Voyages*

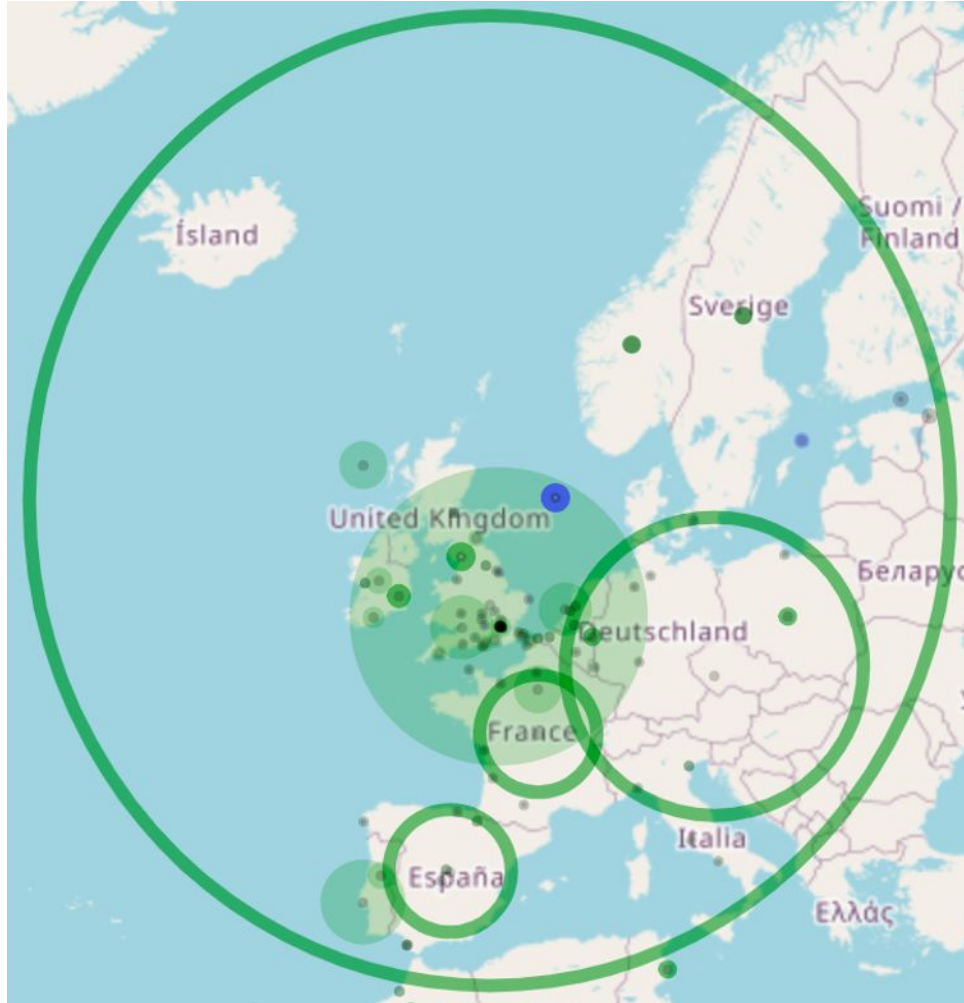


Fig. 7. Britain in Sea Fiction

view



Fig. 8. Cook's Journal

Peer Review



Fig. 9. *Slave Voyages in Africa*

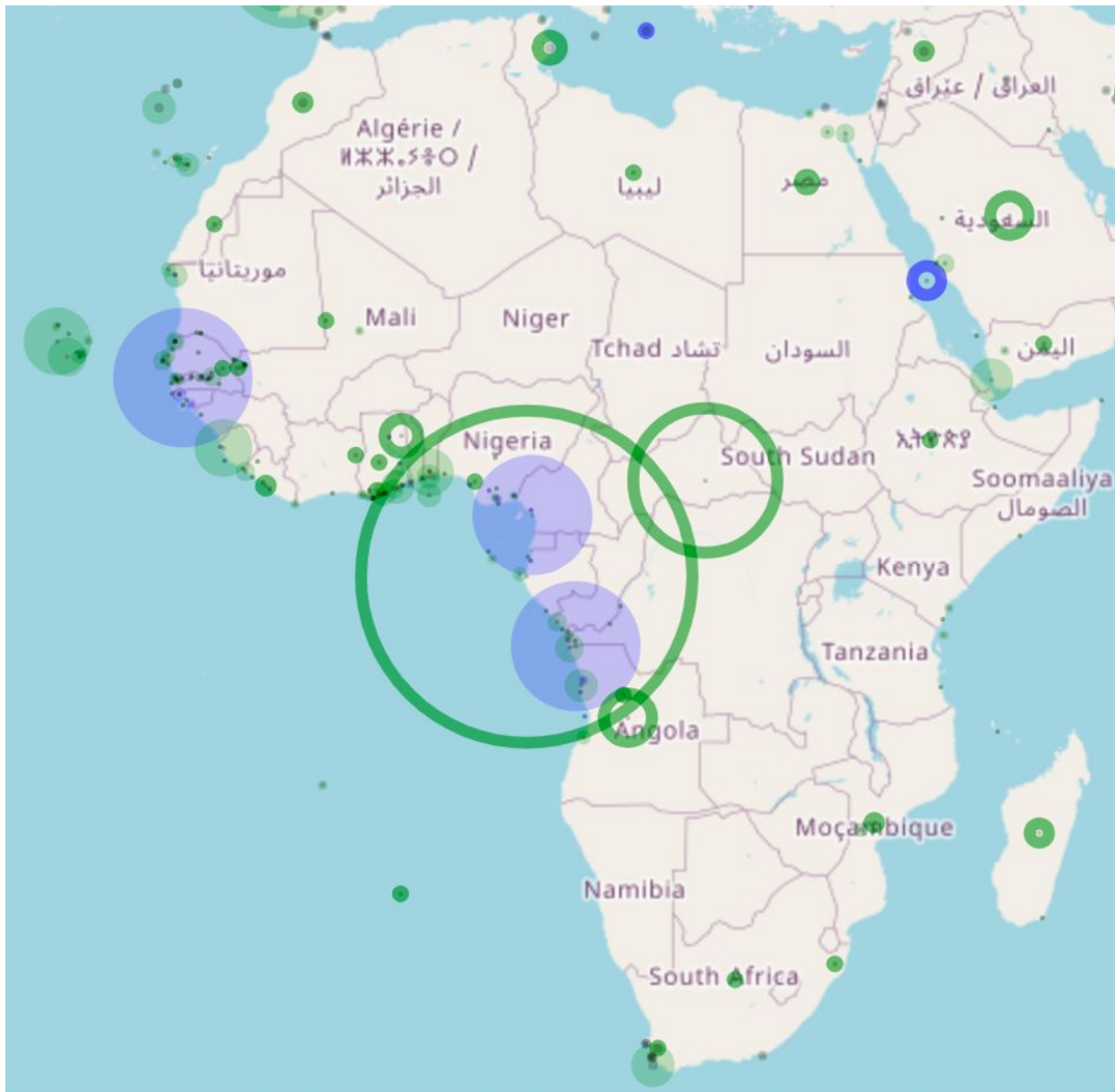


Fig. 10. Green's *New General Collection* in Africa

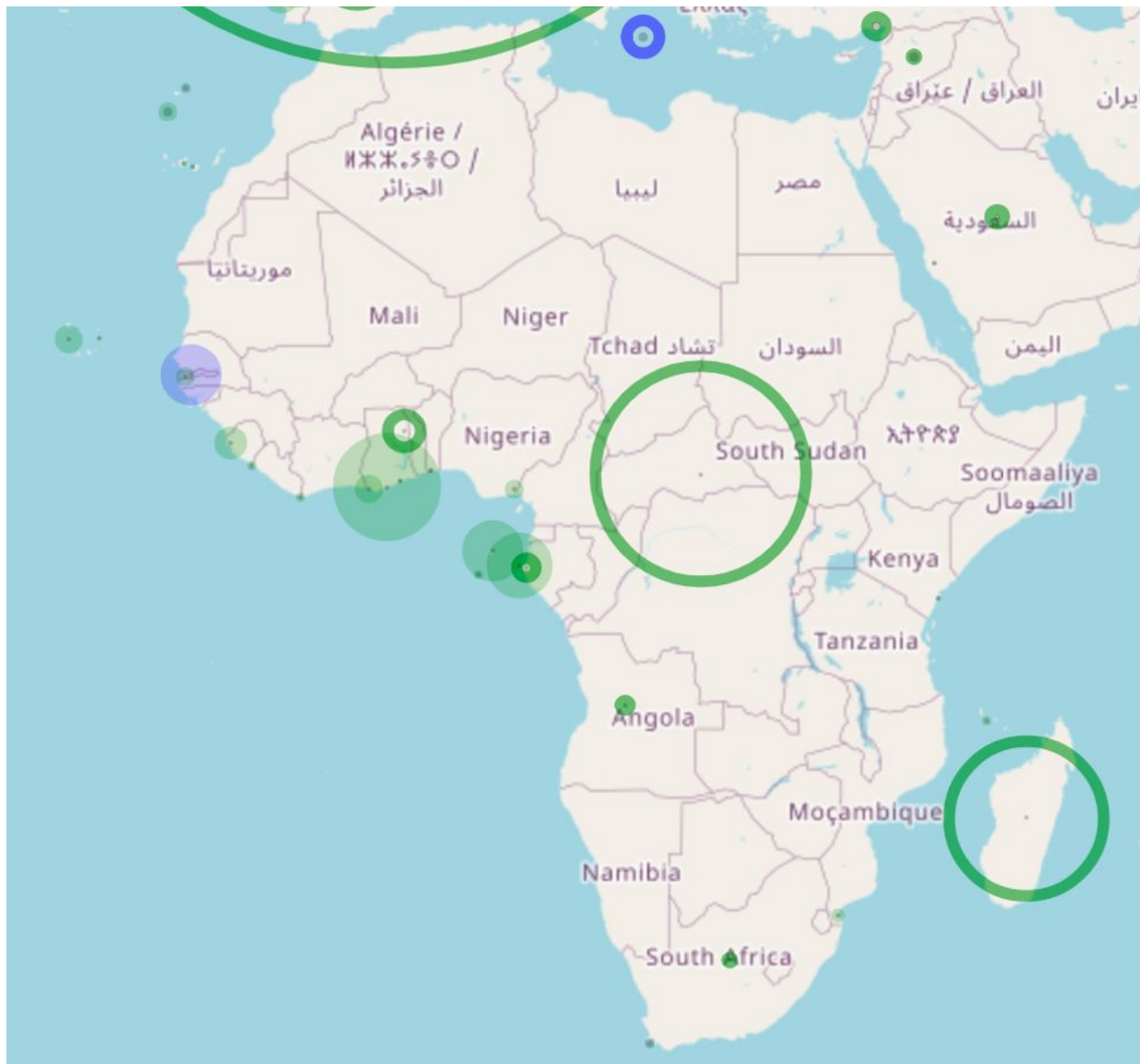


Fig. 11. *Pyrates* in Africa

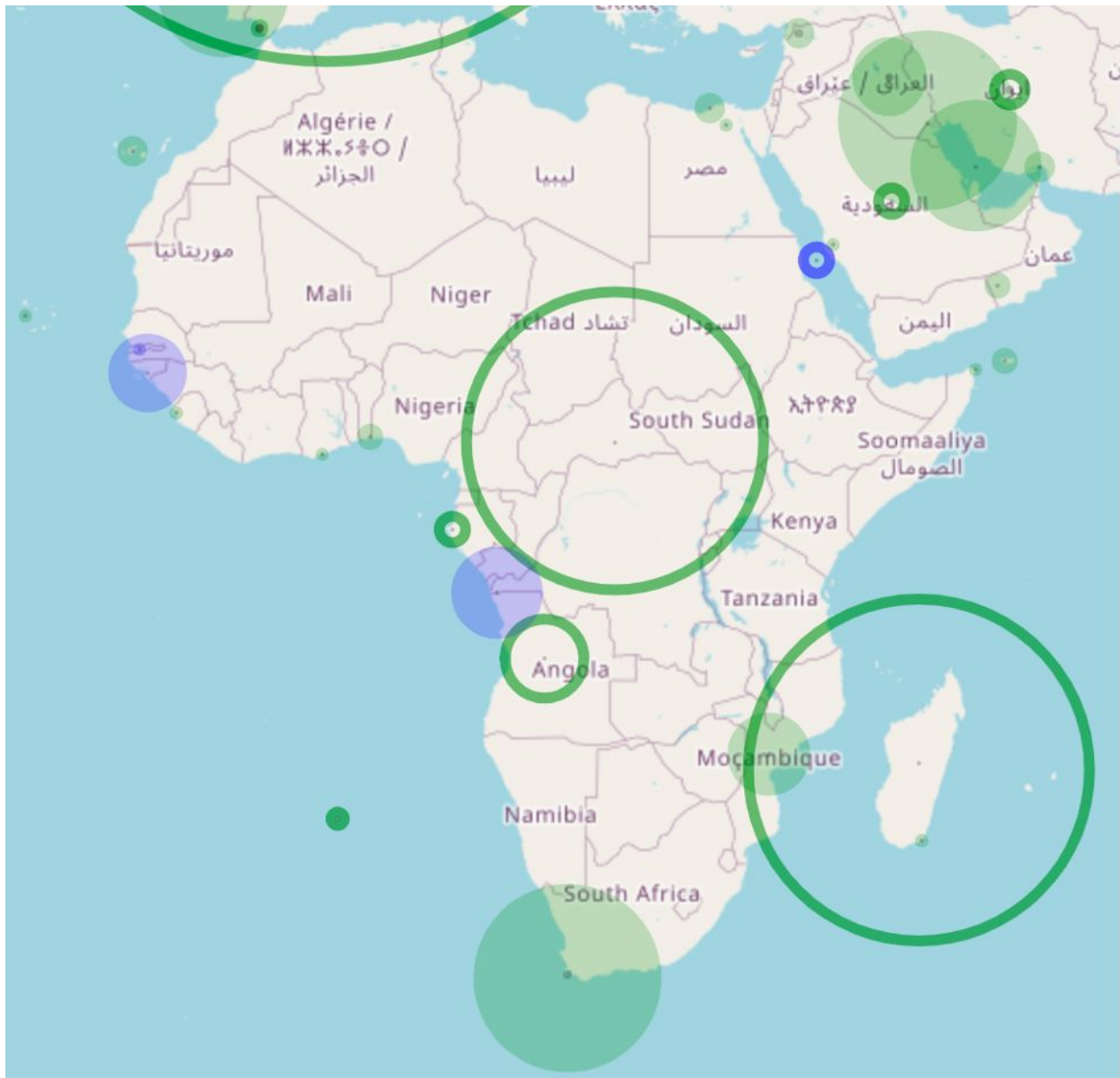


Fig. 12. *Captain Singleton* in Africa



Fig. 13. China in Green's New General Collection

view

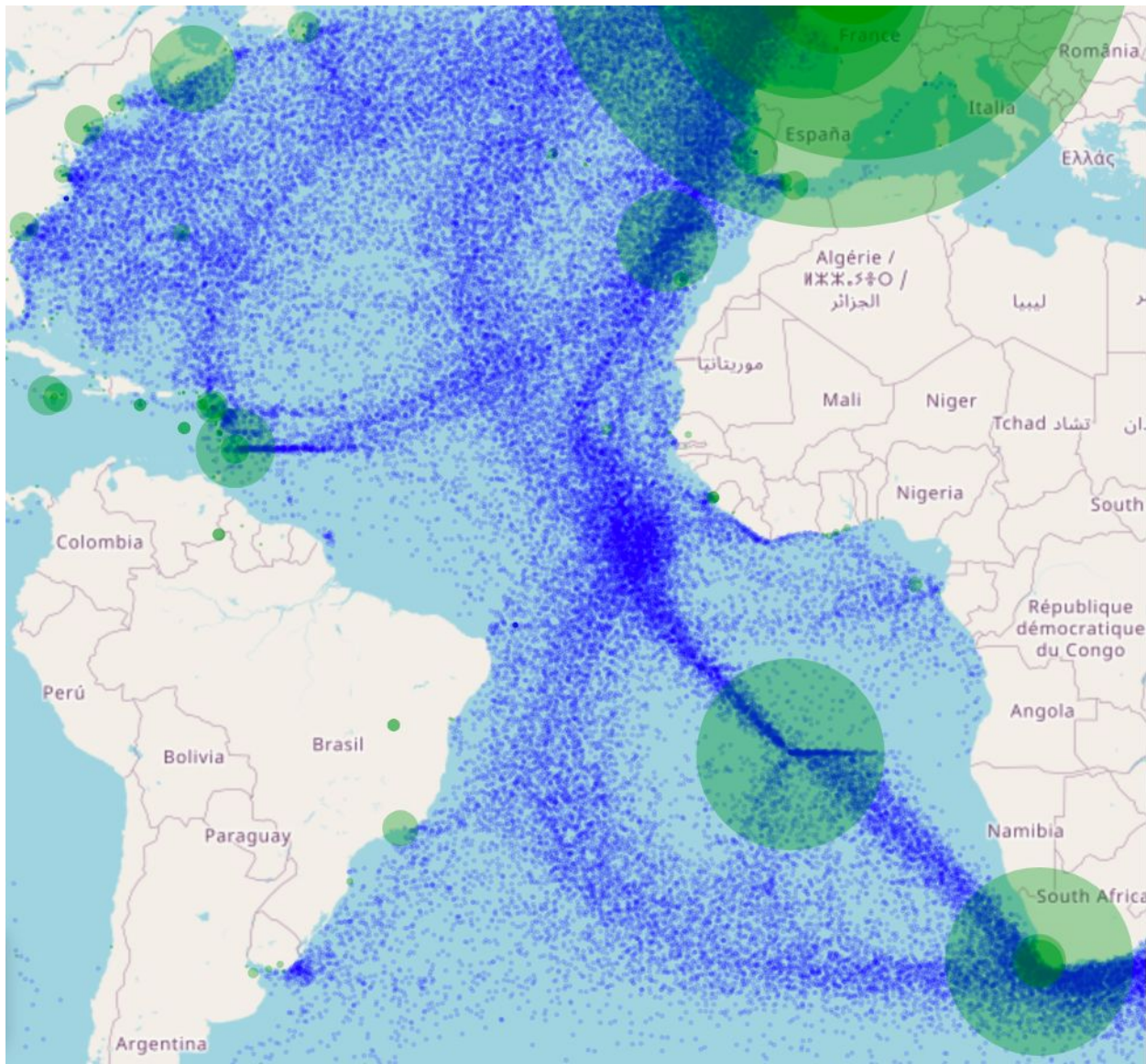


Fig. 14. CLIWOC in the Mid-Atlantic

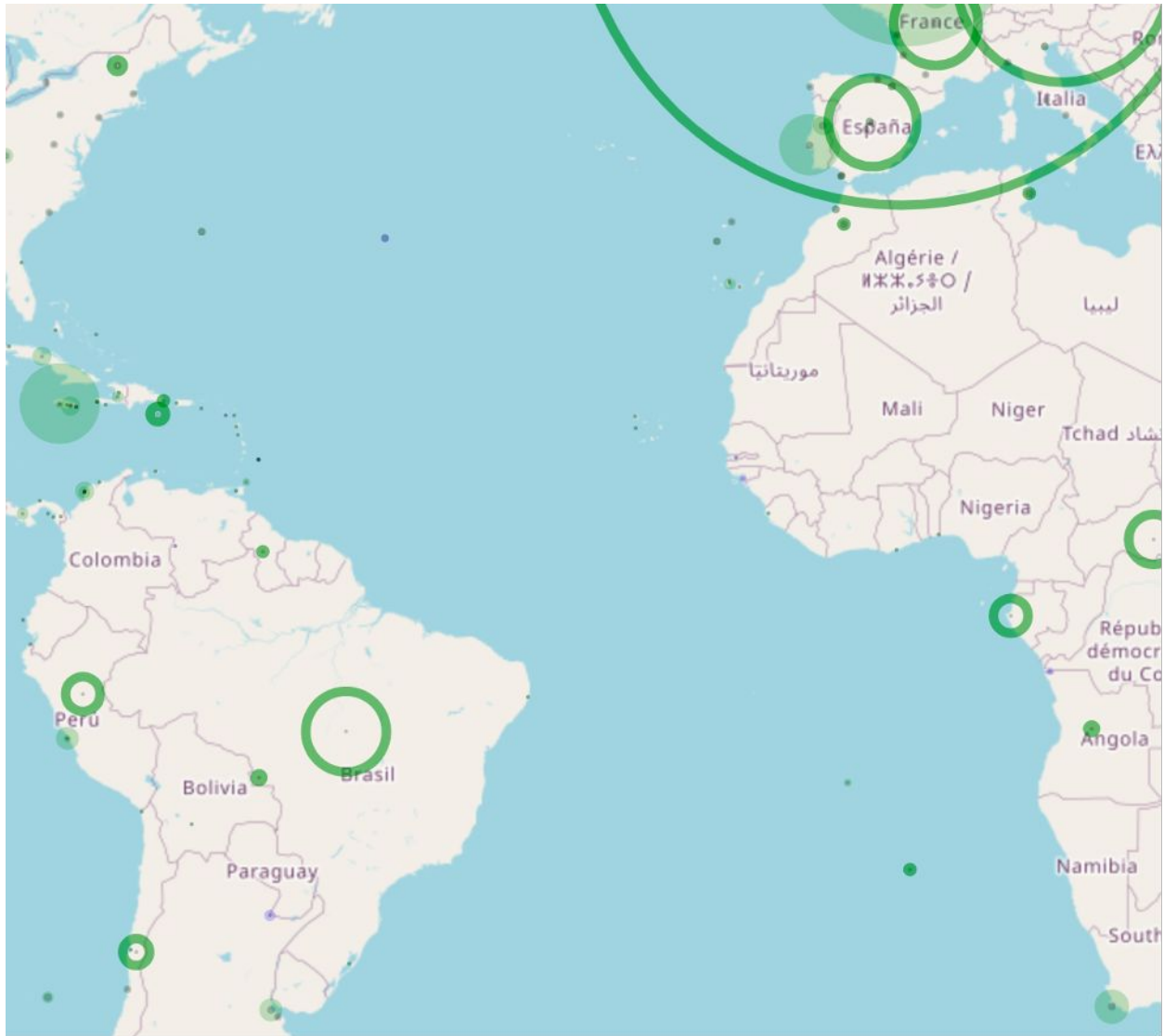


Fig. 15. Sea Fiction in the Mid-Atlantic

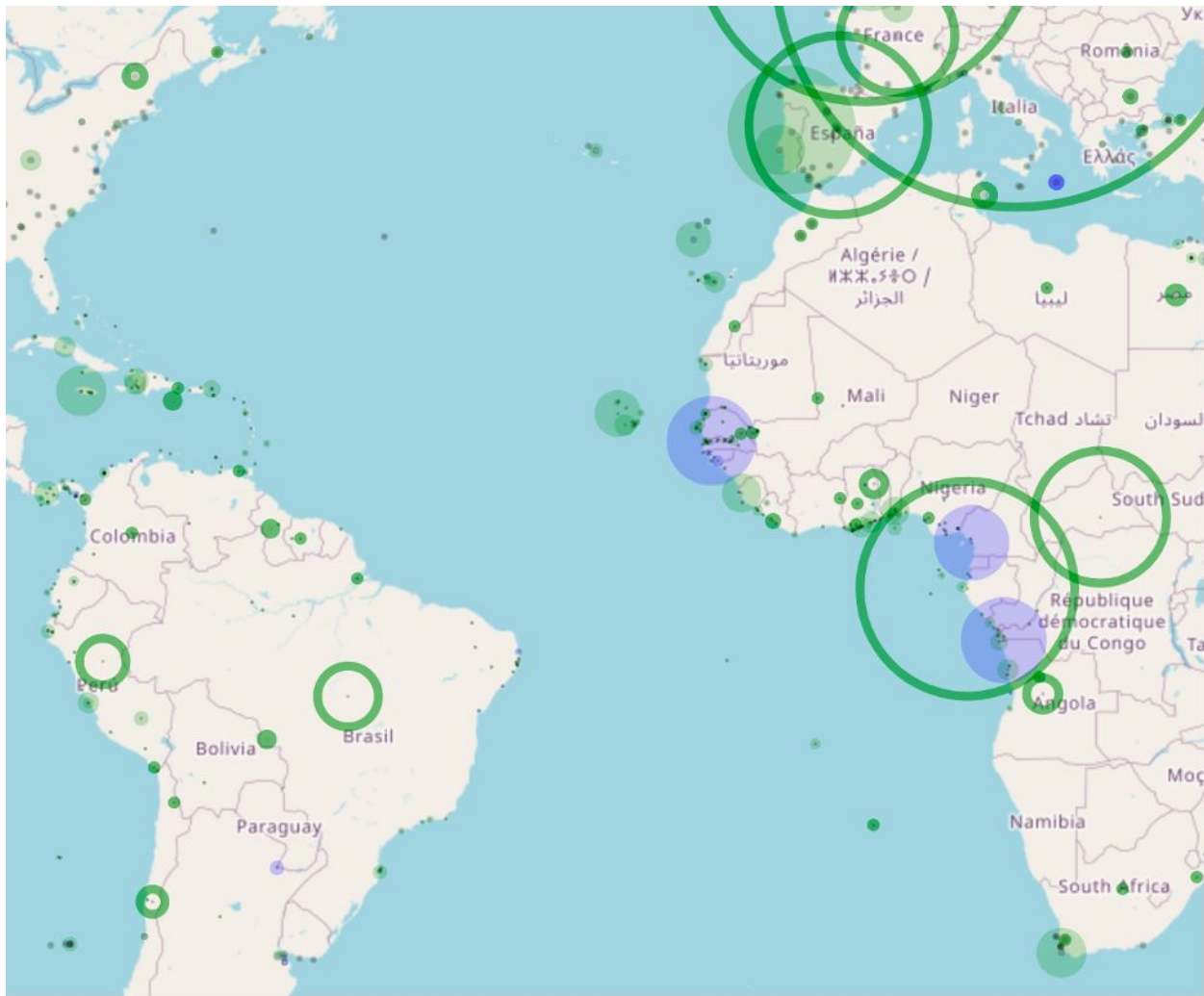


Fig. 16. Sea Nonfiction in the Mid-Atlantic

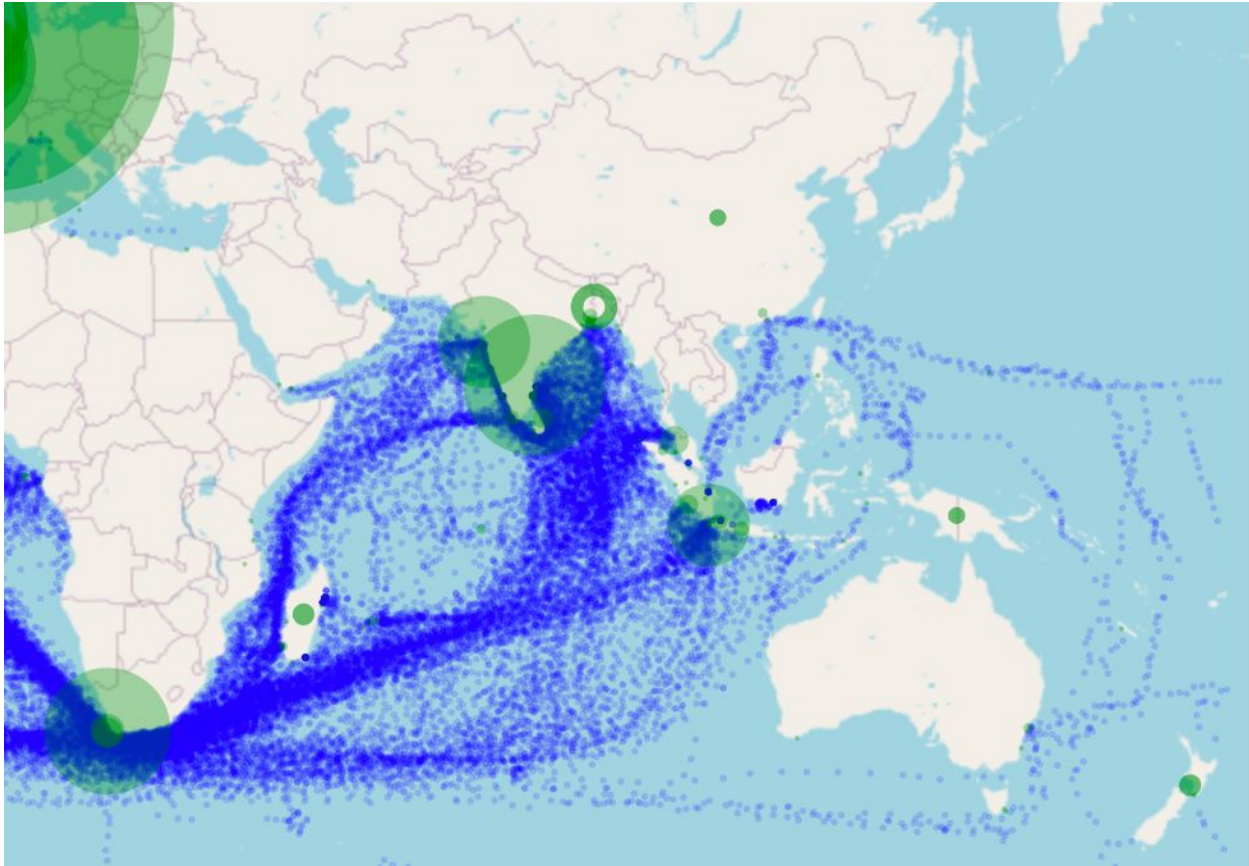


Fig. 17. *CLIWOC* in the Indian and Western Pacific Oceans

Review

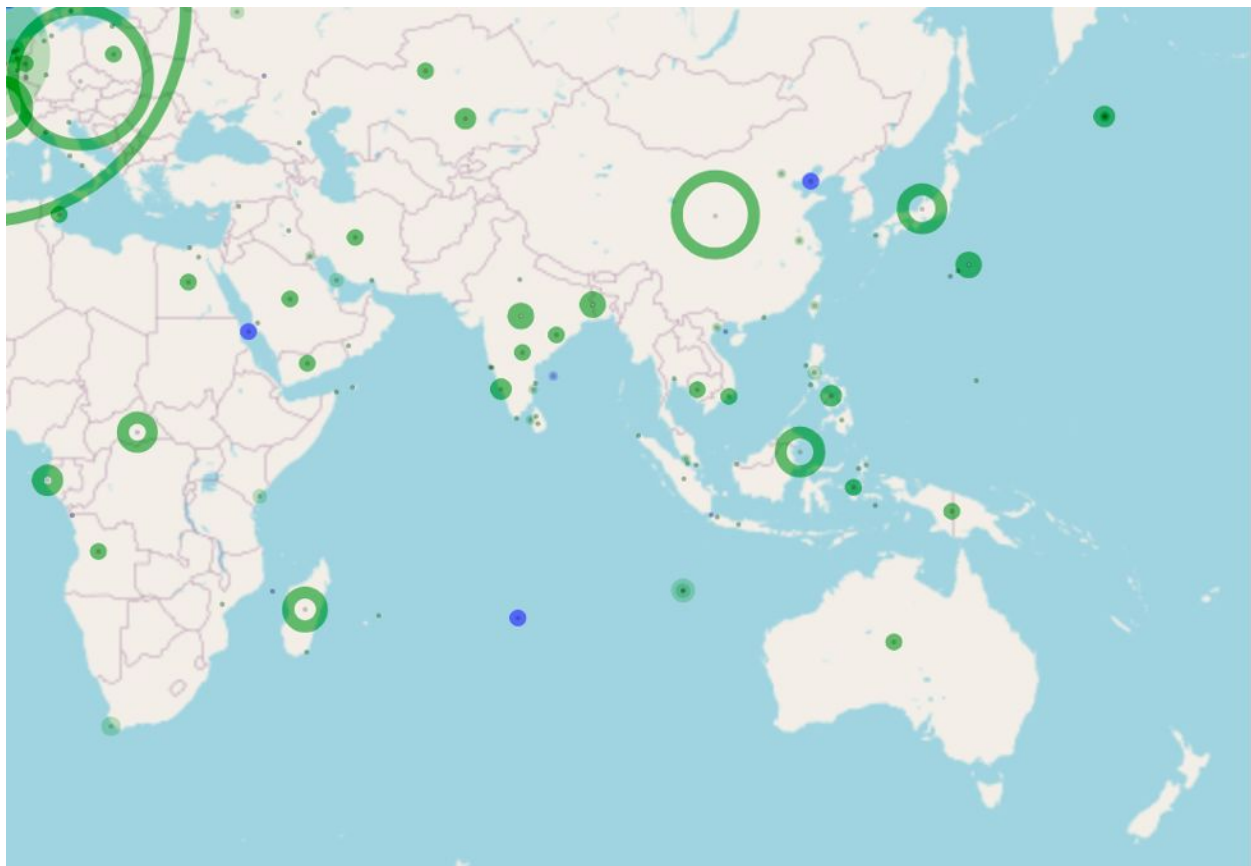


Fig. 18. Sea Fiction in the Indian and Western Pacific Oceans

Review



Fig. 19. Green and Smollett's Collections in the Indian and Western Pacific Oceans

Review

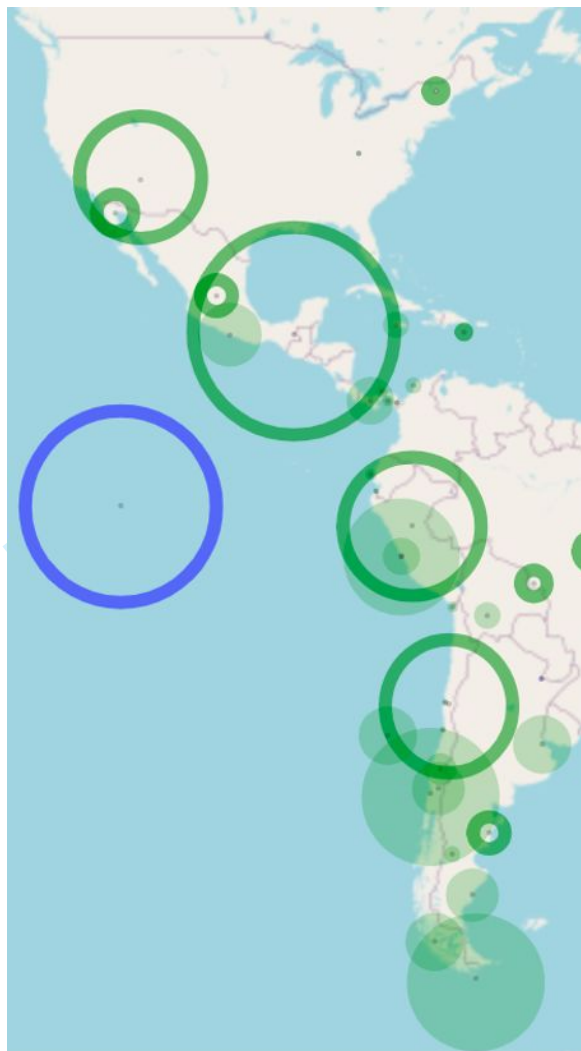


Fig. 20. Defoe's *New Voyage* in Western South and Central America

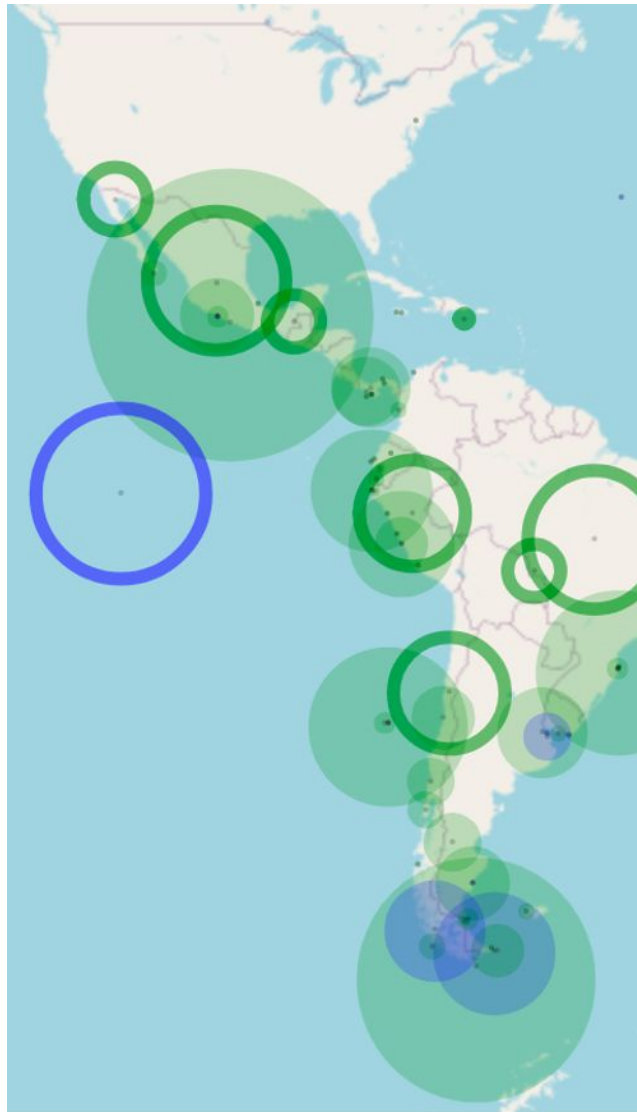


Fig. 21. Anson's *Voyage* in Western South and Central America



Fig. 22. Raynal's *History* in India

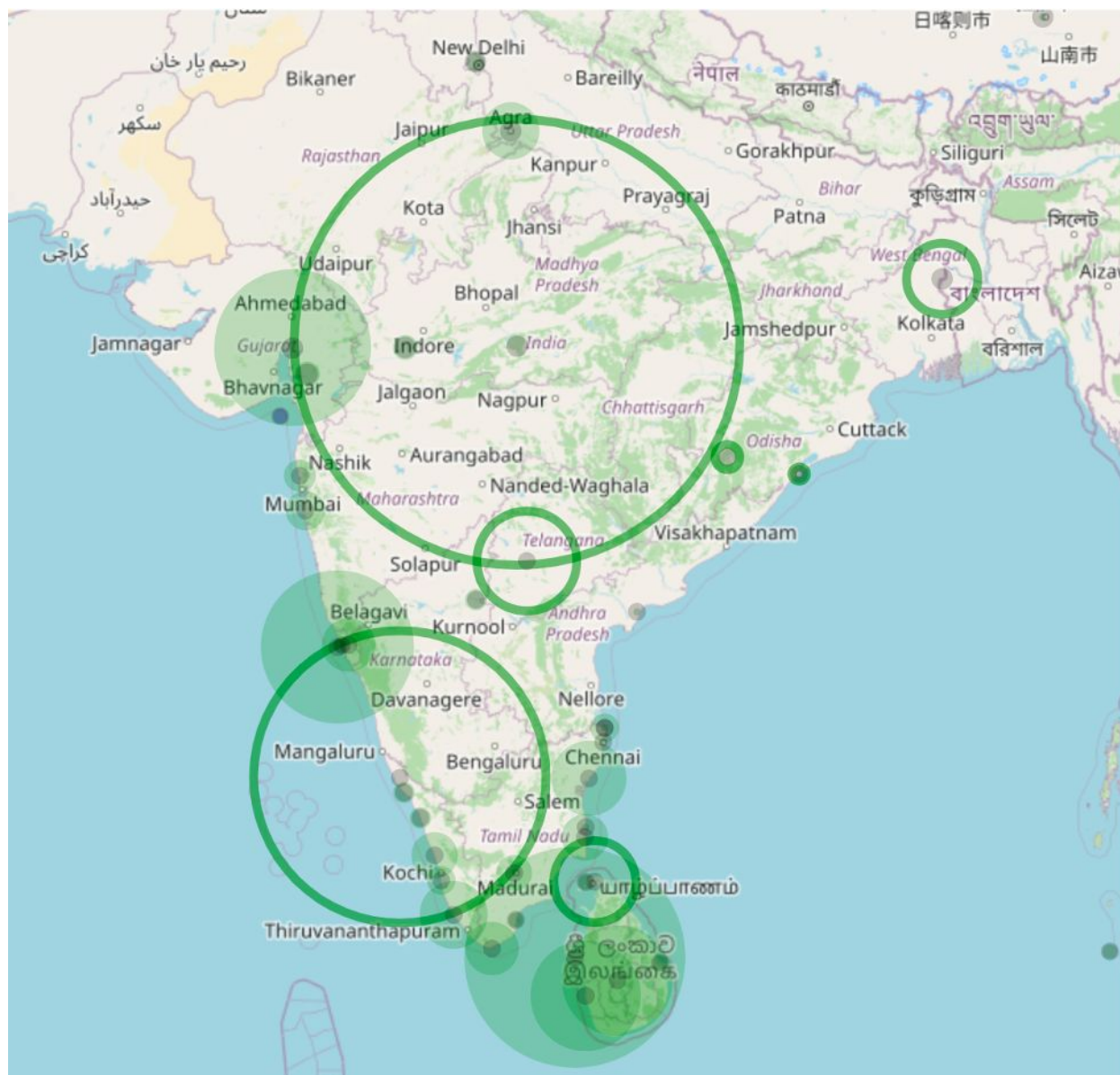


Fig. 23. Smollett's *Compendium* in India

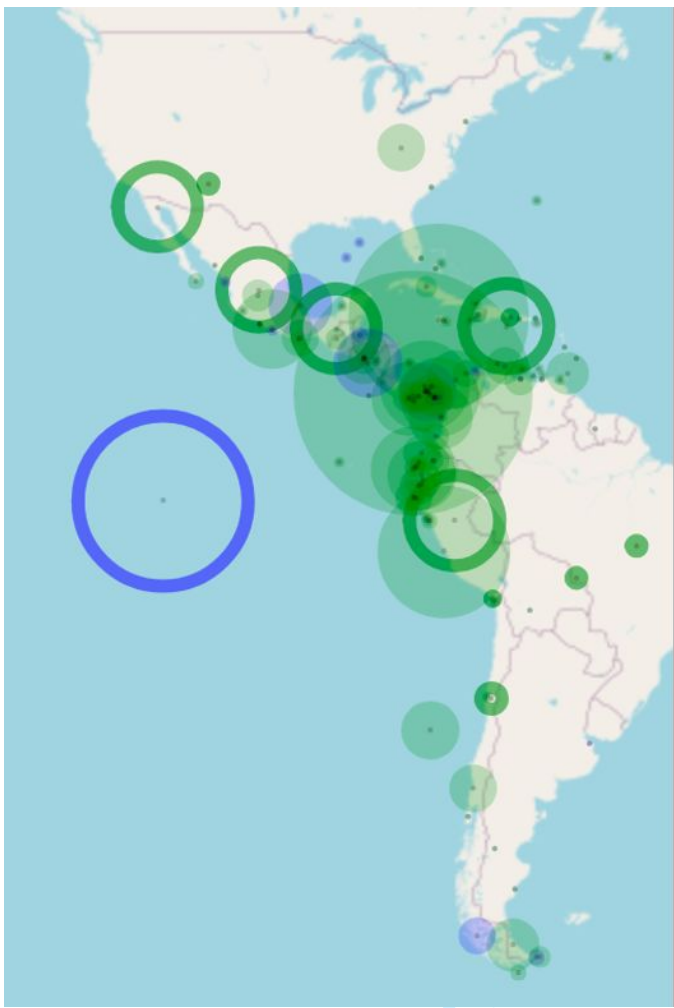


Fig. 24. Dampier's *New Voyage* in Western South and Central America