

3 The Atlantic Ocean

*David Armitage**

There was a time before Atlantic history. Two hundred million years ago, in the early Jurassic, no waters formed either barriers or bridges among what are now the Americas, Europe and Africa. These landmasses formed a single supercontinent of Pangea until tectonic shifts gradually pushed them apart. The movement continues to this day, as the Atlantic basin expands at about the same rate that the Pacific's contracts: roughly two centimetres a year. The Atlantic Ocean, at an average of about 4,000 kilometres wide and 4 kilometres deep, is not as broad or profound as the Pacific, the Earth's largest ocean by far, although its multi-continental shoreline is greater than that of the Pacific and Indian Oceans combined.¹ The Atlantic is now but a suburb of the world ocean. Despite the best efforts of international organisations to demarcate it precisely,² the Atlantic is inextricably part of world history, over geological time as well as on a human scale.

There was Atlantic history long before there were Atlantic historians. There were histories *around* the Atlantic, along its shores and within its coastal waters. There were histories *in* the Atlantic, on its islands and over its open seas. And there were histories *across* the Atlantic, beginning with the Norse voyages in the eleventh century and then becoming repeatable and regular in both directions from the early sixteenth century onwards, long after the Indian and Pacific Oceans had become so widely navigable.³ For almost five centuries, these memories and experiences

* Special thanks to Phil Stern for his acute comments on this chapter.

¹ Jan Zalasiewicz and Mark Williams, *Ocean worlds: The story of seas on Earth and other planets* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 54, 56–57.

² International Hydrographic Bureau, *Limits of oceans and seas*, 3rd edn. (Monte Carlo, 1953), pp. 13, 18–19; Shin Kim, *Limits of Atlantic Ocean*, International Hydrographic Organization, Special publication, 23 (Seoul, 2003).

³ Kirsten A. Seaver, *The frozen echo: Greenland and the exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000–1500* (Stanford, CA, 1996).



Map 3 The Atlantic Ocean

comprised the history of many Atlantics – north and south, eastern and western; Amerindian and African;⁴ enslaved and free; Spanish and

⁴ Paul Cohen, ‘Was there an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the limits of a historiographical concept’, *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008): 388–410; Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and their shared history, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009); John K. Thornton, *A cultural history of the Atlantic World, 1250–1820* (Cambridge, 2012); Jace Weaver, *The red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the making of the modern world, 1000–1927* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015).

Portuguese;⁵ British, French, Dutch, creole and hybrid⁶ – but not yet a single Atlantic history. More comprehensively Atlantic histories began to appear in the late nineteenth century; later, various species of political and geo-political Atlanticism flourished after the two world wars, but it would take until the latter part of the twentieth century for self-identified Atlantic historians to come onto the scene. Only in the early part of our own century did Atlantic history briefly emerge as a discrete field of study before oceanic history and global history engulfed it once more.⁷

In retrospect, Atlantic history appears to have peaked in the early 2000s. ‘We are all Atlantic historians now’, I provocatively declared in 2002, a notorious line usually quoted without its sceptical codicil: ‘*or so it would seem*’ from the explosion of interest in the Atlantic and the Atlantic world as subjects of study among historians of North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa and western Europe.⁸ Within less than a decade, almost thirty collective volumes on Atlantic history had appeared alongside countless articles, theses and monographs (and not just by historians).⁹ In the words of one friendly critic at the time, Atlantic history was ‘not merely trendy, but . . . clearly winning the day’.¹⁰ It challenged the methodological nationalism that had informed professional history-writing since at least the late nineteenth century. It transcended national boundaries and largely ignored territorial frontiers. It stressed mobility and circulation and focused on exchange and hybridity, integration and communication. It treated the ‘creation, destruction and re-creation of communities as a result of the movement, across and around the Atlantic

⁵ John H. Elliott, *El Atlántico español y el Atlántico luso: divergencias y convergencias* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2014).

⁶ Ira Berlin, *Many thousands gone: The first two centuries of slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), on ‘Atlantic creoles’; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen, ‘Hybrid Atlantics: Future directions for the history of the Atlantic world’, *History Compass*, 11, 8 (August 2013): 597–609.

⁷ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Atlantic in world history* (Oxford, 2012); Christoph Strobel, *The global Atlantic 1400 to 1900* (Abingdon, 2015).

⁸ David Armitage, ‘Three concepts of Atlantic history’ (2002), in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 13 (my emphasis); for commentary, see Trevor Burnard, ‘Only connect: The rise and rise (and fall?) of Atlantic history’, *Historically Speaking*, 7 (2006): 19–21; Brian Ward, ‘Caryl Phillips, David Armitage, and the place of the American South in Atlantic and other worlds’, in Ward, Martyn Bone and William A. Link, eds., *The American South and the Atlantic world* (Gainesville, FL, 2013), pp. 8–44.

⁹ Bernard Bailyn, ‘The International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500–1825: A report to the Mellon Foundation on the Seminar’s work and accomplishments, 1995–2013’ (Cambridge, MA, 2013), p. 12.

¹⁰ Peter A. Coclanis, ‘*Drang Nach Osten*: Bernard Bailyn, the world-island, and the idea of Atlantic History’, *Journal of World History*, 13 (2002): 170.

basin, of people, commodities, cultural practices, and ideas'.¹¹ And it did so in a context defined by empires as well as states and within the perspective of developing political economy.¹² At its most ambitious, Atlantic history joined distinct regions and expanded conventional chronologies into narratives of large-scale change over three or four centuries. During these boom years, what was good for Atlantic history seemed to be good for oceanic history more generally, and even for transnational history *tout court*.

However, every boom risks a bust. Atlantic history's ascendancy was palpable but short-lived. The cause was less exhaustion than a certain repetition within the field along with increasing competition from without. Scholarly production of Atlantic histories hardly ceased but the field's adolescent energy waned and it was increasingly challenged as an historiographical inspiration. Its greatest booster and entrepreneur, Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn, noted in 2015 that Atlantic history had 'developed so swiftly that by 2010 some Atlantic historians had become Atlantic world weary and the basic idea was becoming passé'.¹³ Supranational areas of study experienced their own growth spurts. New global histories, as well as other oceanic histories, began to overshadow and even to subsume Atlantic history. Atlantic world-weariness led to the sobering conclusions that the field had 'fallen on hard times', that it 'certainly ha[d] not lived up to the promises of its early supporters' and that 'this ocean was not necessarily more influential than local, regional or global factors in the everyday lives of many inhabitants of Africa, America and Europe'.¹⁴ A new consensus was emerging. We were *not* all Atlantic historians now. We never had been. Probably, we never would be.¹⁵

At its zenith, Atlantic history sat mostly in splendid isolation. Its reigning vision was holistic but somewhat hermetic. It encompassed inter-continental and transoceanic connections but it was in denial about its eclectic ancestry and drew little sustenance from other oceanic histories. 'How had the idea of Atlantic history developed?', Bailyn asked in 2005.

¹¹ J. H. Elliott, 'Atlantic History: A circumnavigation,' in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800*, p. 259.

¹² Sophus Reinert and Pernille Røge, eds., *The political economy of Empire in the early modern world* (Basingstoke, 2013).

¹³ Bernard Bailyn, 'Hot dreams of liberty', *New York Review of Books*, 62, 13 (13 August 2015), 50 (quoted).

¹⁴ Patrick Griffin, 'A plea for a new Atlantic History', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 68 (2011): 236; Richard J. Blakemore, 'The changing fortunes of Atlantic history', *English Historical Review*, 131 (2016): 867.

¹⁵ Michelle Craig McDonald, 'There are still Atlanticists now: A subfield reborn', *Journal of the Early Republic*, 36 (2016): 701–13, offers a more upbeat view, based on recent publishing patterns in Anglophone journals.

‘Not in imitation of Fernand Braudel’s concept of Mediterranean history’, he replied, nor did he believe it was an extension of imperial history or the product of the history of encounters and exploration.¹⁶ Now that Atlantic history is no longer even first among equals, it is clear that both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean challenge the Atlantic for chronological priority as maritime zones and as spaces of historical memory.¹⁷ There is also a stronger case that the Pacific Ocean had been generating historical inspiration for decades before Atlantic history briefly asserted its predominance.¹⁸ And it is more obvious than ever that the historiographies of other seas and oceans – the Red Sea and Black Sea; the Baltic and South China seas; the Southern Ocean and the Arctic Ocean – owe little debt to the historiography of the Atlantic.¹⁹ Atlantic history is poised to become a consumer rather than a producer of models for other oceanic histories. Accordingly, this chapter attempts to show what those models have to offer Atlantic historians, in a post-Atlantic world of plurality and proliferation.

Atlantic History’s Hundred Horizons

Before there was the Atlantic, or Atlantic history, there was a ‘complex of seas’, formed of many segmented and discontinuous Atlantics – even if they were not known by that name or placed in that frame.²⁰ There were no westward probes across the ocean until centuries after eastward-moving peoples had created pathways across the sea: to this extent, the history of the ocean’s becoming ‘*the Atlantic*’ must still start with Europe and with Europeans. Until the fifteenth century, most navigation was coastal, leading to cartographies both mental and formal that resembled roadmaps more than navigational charts, much like early modern Japanese representations of a ‘small eastern sea’ rather than of an open Pacific

¹⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and contours* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), pp. 4–6.

¹⁷ Molly Greene, ‘The Mediterranean Sea’; Sujit Sivasundaram, ‘The Indian Ocean’, in this volume.

¹⁸ Alison Bashford, ‘The Pacific Ocean’, in this volume.

¹⁹ See the relevant chapters in this volume by Jonathan Miran, Stella Ghervas, Michael North, Eric Tagliacozzo, Alessandro Antonello and Sverker Sörlin.

²⁰ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (London, 1972–73), I, p. 18; Barry Cunliffe, *On the ocean: The Mediterranean and the Atlantic from prehistory to AD 1500* (Oxford, 2017); Patricia Pearson, ‘The world of the Atlantic before the “Atlantic world”’: Africa, Europe, and the Americas before 1850’, in Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic World, 1450–2000* (Bloomington, IN, 2008), pp. 3–26; Benjamin Hudson, ed., *Studies in the Medieval Atlantic* (Basingstoke, 2012).

Ocean.²¹ The Norsemen who settled in what is now Newfoundland likely thought they were in Africa; Christopher Columbus probably went to his grave believing he had reached Asia. The waters they had crossed joined known parts of the world but did not display vast novel vistas; they would not appear on maps, or in European minds, until sixteenth-century Spanish navigational manuals and Dutch cartography began to reveal the full extent of what stood between Europe and Africa on one side and the Americas on the other. Yet even then, what oceanographers now think of as ‘the’ Atlantic long remained divided into sub-oceanic regions, particularly along a north–south axis bisected by the Equator. Oceanic currents, such as the Gulf Stream – first mapped by Benjamin Franklin in the late 1760s, though undoubtedly familiar long before in sailors’ artisanal knowledge – created routes through the ocean that reinforced the distinctions.²² At least until the early nineteenth century, denizens and historians of the ocean had to reckon with ‘both Atlantics’, as the pioneering hydrographer James Rennell termed them around 1830.²³ As late as the 1870s, the northern portion could still be called, in a reference work from the United States, ‘the Atlantic proper’, in contrast to the ‘Ethiopic’ sector, or South Atlantic.²⁴ ‘The Atlantic is crossed daily by steamers’, wrote the American oceanographer Matthew Fontaine Maury in 1861, ‘the Pacific not once a year.’²⁵

Until the late nineteenth century, then, there were at least two Atlantics. Above the Equator, lay the ‘Mer du Nord’, the ‘North Sea’ or, as Britons called it, with their eyes turned towards North America, the ‘Western Ocean’. Beneath the Equator, there was a mostly separate oceanic system that emerged with voyaging back and forth between Africa and South America, particularly in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade: this was, variously, the ‘Oceanus Ethiopicum’, the ‘Mare Aethiopicum’,

²¹ Marcia Yonemoto, ‘Maps and metaphors of the “small Eastern Sea” in Tokugawa Japan’, *Geographical Review*, 89 (1999): 169–87.

²² Joyce E. Chaplin, ‘The Atlantic Ocean and its contemporary meanings, 1492–1808’, in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic history: A critical appraisal* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 36–39; Chaplin, ‘Circulations: Benjamin Franklin’s gulf stream’, in James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, eds., *Science and empire in the Atlantic world* (Abingdon, 2007), pp. 73–96.

²³ James Rennell, *An Investigation of the currents of the Atlantic Ocean, and of those which prevail between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic*, ed. Jane Rodd (London, 1832), p. 60; see *ibid.*, pp. 69–70 on ‘the two Atlantics’. Rennell’s work appeared posthumously.

²⁴ George Ripley and Charles A. Dana, eds., *The American cyclopædia: A popular dictionary of general knowledge*, 16 vols. (New York, 1873), II, p. 69, quoted in Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, ‘The Ethiopic Ocean – History and historiography, 1600–1975’, *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies*, 27 (2015): 2.

²⁵ Matthew Fontaine Maury, *The physical geography of the sea and its meteorology* (1861), ed. John Leighly (Cambridge, MA, 1963), p. 37.

‘Oceano Australe’, ‘Oceano Meridionale’ or ‘Mare Magnum Australe’. The Afro-Latin Atlantic, with Brazil and Angola at its extremities, was the arena for the ‘longest and most intense forced migration of the modern era’, in which almost five million enslaved persons were transported westwards from Africa between 1556 and the end of the Brazilian slave-trade in 1850. As Luiz Felipe de Alencastro has persuasively argued, that mid-nineteenth-century moment marked a major watershed in Atlantic history by diminishing the significance of one maritime system – the South Atlantic Gyre in which currents and winds had determined routes of travel in the age of sail – at the point when steamships were liberating mariners and their vessels from the winds and allowed the northern and southern Atlantic systems to be more firmly sutured together.²⁶ It was not a coincidence that perhaps the greatest emancipated voice of the age, Frederick Douglass, proclaimed in 1852 that, ‘Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic, are distinctly heard on the other.’²⁷ Douglass was no doubt thinking of ‘the Atlantic proper’, but his words increasingly described the Atlantic basin as a whole, north and south as well as east and west.

The emergence of this integrated Atlantic – post-emancipation, post-colonial, if not quite (or perhaps ever) post-imperial – made possible the imagination of larger Atlantic histories in the sense of historical accounts that took the Atlantic basin as their bailiwick. Indeed, a narrative arising from this moment and constructed around the rise and fall of the slave-trade and the histories of slavery and emancipation, may be the most promising point of origin for Atlantic history itself. W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The suppression of the African slave-trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (1896) is emblematic of this post-emancipation historiography, a history of the black Atlantic a century before the sociologist Paul Gilroy made the term fashionable while using Du Bois’s own concept of ‘double consciousness’ as a lens.²⁸ Du Bois’s was a study on an inter-continental scale over a *longue durée* of almost 250 years. Without his

²⁶ Alencastro, ‘The Ethiopic Ocean’, 1, 6; see also Kenneth Maxwell, ‘The Atlantic in the eighteenth century: A southern perspective on the need to return to the “big picture”’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, n.s. 3 (1993): 209–36.

²⁷ Frederick Douglass, ‘What to the slave is the fourth of July?: An address delivered in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 1852’, in *The Frederick Douglass papers, series one: Speeches, debates, and interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame, 5 vols. (New Haven, CT, 1979–92), II, p. 387.

²⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The suppression of the African slave-trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (New York, 1896); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

work, studies such as C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) or Eric Williams's *Capitalism and slavery* (1944) would have been inconceivable. Nor might we have had the single greatest macroscope for viewing the Atlantic as a dynamic, destructive, circulatory system – the online Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database detailing nearly 36,000 voyages carrying as many as 12.5 million people across the ocean.²⁹ There was a black Atlantic history almost before there was any other Atlantic history, and it placed bondage and forced displacement of subaltern populations at the heart of the Atlantic story.

As if to answer this black Atlantic vision, a distinctly white and racially charged Atlantic also emerged briefly in the early twentieth century. This was the geo-political vision of an Atlantic world imagined by the German political geographer Karl Haushofer in the 1920s. Haushofer is perhaps better known now for his vision of Pacific history – another early and anomalous precursor to a burgeoning field of oceanic history – but the two emerged in tandem in the pages of his journal, the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*.³⁰ There, the Atlantic world (*Atlantische Welt*) comprised the continents of the Americas, the oceans around them and only the sub-Saharan parts of Africa. Haushofer clearly separated this from another sphere of influence with its own independent history and destiny, the 'Old World' (*Alte Welt*) of Europe, North Africa and the Arabian peninsula. This *Atlantische Welt* connected the Americas to Africa but not to Europe, and hence a racialised and creolised hemisphere with oceanic projections.³¹ This was an Atlantic world outside of any Atlantic history that had been, or ever would be, imagined again.

The next wave of Atlantic histories came during what, from an Atlantic perspective, was the inter-war period.³² In the closing stages of the First World War, the American journalist Walter Lippmann began to write of an 'Atlantic community', which was initially North Atlantic in scope but which he later extended to include various Latin American countries. His idea went underground during an era of American isolationism but resurfaced later as the backstory for the institutionalised Atlantic

²⁹ www.slavevoyages.org/ (accessed 31 March 2017); David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic slave trade* (New Haven, CT, 2010).

³⁰ On Haushofer's Pacific vision, see Alison Bashford, 'Karl Haushofer's *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean*', in Kate Fullagar, ed., *The Atlantic world in the antipodes: Effects and transformations since the eighteenth century* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012), pp. 120–43.

³¹ See the world map from *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, 1, 4 (1924), reproduced in William O'Reilly, 'Genealogies of Atlantic history', *Atlantic Studies*, 1 (2004): 79.

³² For more on these genealogies of Atlantic history, see Sylvia Marzagalli, 'Sur les origines de l'"Atlantic history": paradigme interprétatif de l'histoire des espaces atlantiques à l'époque moderne', *Dix-huitième Siècle*, 33 (2001): 17–31; O'Reilly, 'Genealogies of Atlantic history'.

community erected after the next great war. Lippmann emerged afresh as a promoter of Atlanticism as a species of internationalism in the era of US-led building of international institutions, from the Atlantic Charter (1941) and the United Nations to UNESCO to NATO, that is often held to be the seedbed for Atlantic history as an integrated field of focus.³³ It is from this moment that we get the initial conception of 'Atlantic world' as a geopolitical expression of an Atlantic community and as a historical entity in the writings of diplomats and legal internationalists but not yet among historians.³⁴ It was in the early 1970s that the idea of an 'Atlantic world' first broke free of these origins to migrate into broader historiography. It only became a widespread term of art in the new century, when its usage ballooned in historical work after 2000: six scholarly articles in the English used the term in their titles in the 1990s but over fifty did so in the 2000s, and there has been a similar pattern of invocations since 2010.³⁵

The post-Second World War genealogy of Atlantic history underpinned a narrative with a durable chronology and implied geography. European westward expansion into oceanic space led to waves of emigration premised on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the destruction or transmutation of their communities in order to facilitate settler colonialism, initially under the supervision of European metropolises. The increasingly insatiable slave trade pumped expendable labour into a system of early capitalist production, leading to escalating inequality and racial domination. Those hierarchies did not collapse when perceived political oppression and the creole response to it sparked a series of 'Atlantic revolutions' that led to political independence, the formation of new nation-states (which were retrofitted with their own national histories) and, with a delay of decades and sometimes as a result of civil war, the emancipation of the enslaved. This was the teleological narrative that informed Atlantic history at the height of its fortunes in the early twenty-first century. It settled into a timeline between the late fifteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth century but inevitably missed the watershed of 1850 and the later Brazilian abolition of 1888 and only

³³ Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, pp. 6–30, is the classic account of this genealogy of Atlantic history.

³⁴ See, for example, Arnold Ræstad, *Europe and the Atlantic world*, ed. Winthrop W. Case (Princeton, NJ, 1941); Ræstad, *Europe and the Atlantic world* (Oslo, 1958); Claude Delmas, *Le monde Atlantique* (Paris, 1958); Robert Strausz-Hupé, et al., *Building the Atlantic world* (New York, 1960).

³⁵ The first use of 'Atlantic world' in the title of a historical monograph in English seems to be K. G. Davies, *The North Atlantic world in the seventeenth century* (Minneapolis, MN, 1974). JSTOR articles with the words 'Atlantic World' in the title appeared at the following rate: 1970s (1); 1980s (2); 1990s (6); 2000s (52); 2010–16 (32).

belatedly incorporated the Haitian Revolution as a pivotal event. It was, by accident or design, but still without acknowledgment, an Atlantic history whose chronology revealed its geography as still centred on that 'proper' Atlantic above the Equator.

This was a history of the North Atlantic as the Mediterranean of modernity, strung between European expansion and early industrialisation and informed by a liberal story of oppression relieved by revolution and emancipation, both personal and political. In the hands of the French historian Jacques Godechot and his American collaborator, R. R. Palmer, this political narrative produced a history of modern Western civilisation with the Atlantic at its heart. However, the Atlantic itself was more a hole than a centre. Their germinal paper, 'Le problème de l'Atlantique', presented in Rome in 1955, depicted an Atlantic world without an ocean: like Palmer's great solo work, *The age of the democratic revolution* (1959–64), their piece can hardly be said to contribute to Atlantic history as an oceanic history, though Godechot himself had written the first maritime history of the Atlantic in French in 1947.³⁶ (The first English-language histories of the Atlantic, published in 1957 by two mariner-writers, the American Leonard Outhwaite and the Australian Alan Villiers, were popular works firmly focused on the North Atlantic.)³⁷ It would take students of the early modern Hispanic Atlantic inspired by Fernand Braudel in the 1950s, such as Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, Huguette Chaunu and Pierre Chaunu and Frédéric Mauro, to apply Mediterranean models to the Atlantic and its regions, even if Braudel himself found their work 'arbitrary' for failing to achieve his holistic ambitions.³⁸ As a result, these avatars of Atlantic history were rarely invoked later as originators of the field, in favour of dry-footed historians like Palmer who had little interest in the history of the Atlantic Ocean *per se*.

³⁶ Jacques Godechot, *Histoire de l'Atlantique* (Paris, 1947); R. R. Palmer and Jacques Godechot, 'Le problème de l'Atlantique du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle', in *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche (Rome, 4–11 Settembre 1955)*, 6 vols. (Florence, 1955), V, pp. 175–239; Palmer, *The age of the democratic revolution: A political history of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, introd. David Armitage (Princeton, NJ, 2014).

³⁷ Leonard Outhwaite, *The Atlantic: A history of an ocean* (New York, 1957); Alan Villiers, *Wild ocean: The story of the North Atlantic and the men who sailed it* (New York, 1957). (Villiers also wrote an early work of Indian Ocean history: *The Indian Ocean* (London, 1952); Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', p. 000 above.) Their descendant is Simon Winchester, *Atlantic: A vast ocean of a million stories* (London, 2010).

³⁸ Vitorino de Magalhães Godinho, 'Problèmes d'économie atlantique: Le Portugal, flottes du sucre et flottes de l'or, 1670–1770', *Annales ESC*, 5 (1950): 184–97; Huguette Chaunu and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique, 1504–1650*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1955–59); Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique au XVII^e siècle, 1570–1670: étude économique* (Paris, 1960); Alencastro, 'The Ethiopic Ocean', 35–37.

Until the explosion of self-consciously Atlantic history in the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholarship flowed largely in the channels cut after the Second World War. These intellectual conduits directed Atlantic history into imperial and national histories, within a chronology from encounter to emancipation between the late fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The major exceptions were those African historians like Philip Curtin who followed Du Bois and his successors in studying the long-term dynamics of the slave trade: their work necessarily affirmed the established periodisation of Atlantic history, but it penetrated deeper into the South Atlantic context and into Africa, it integrated the Caribbean more firmly within Atlantic history and it focused on a slave-system driven by national entities, in Portugal and Britain especially, but decidedly supranational and intercontinental in scope.³⁹

The challenge for Atlantic history in the late twentieth century was threefold: first, to integrate the various streams of Atlantic history – political, economic and cultural; black and white Atlantics; national and transnational histories; second, to press against conventional chronological and geographical boundaries; and third, to define the identity of the field without cutting it off from other areas of historical inquiry. The rapid maturation and equally speedy dissolution of Atlantic history in the early 2000s only partly rose to those challenges. To be sure, as the proliferation of seminars and conferences, monographs and articles demonstrated, Atlantic history offered an expansively integrative approach at just the moment when historians were becoming increasingly sceptical that a national frame was adequate to capture the processes, both local and global, in which they were interested. The major syntheses that emerged in the wake of this expansion of monographic work, in the form of textbooks and surveys as Atlantic history became a widespread teaching field, consolidated this integrative tendency, especially by combining the black, white and ‘red’ (or Indigenous) Atlantics into multi-ethnic narratives.⁴⁰ They were less successful in breaching the apparently impenetrable barrier of the mid-nineteenth century: the moment when both Atlantics were finally joined into a single communications system continued to mark the outer limit of Atlantic history, at least chronologically. Historians of early globalisation centred on the late nineteenth-century Atlantic economy, students of the US Civil War era and scholars of migration who note the movement of sixty-five million Europeans across the ocean between 1830 and 1930, have made the case

³⁹ See, for example, Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic slave trade: A census* (Madison, WI, 1969).

⁴⁰ See especially Benjamin, *The Atlantic world*, and Thornton, *A cultural history of the Atlantic world, 1250–1820*, as well as the guide to ‘Further Reading’ for this chapter.

for a 'long Atlantic'.⁴¹ However, what Emma Rothschild calls 'provincialism in time' has proved more resilient than provincialism in space, and this longer Atlantic has yet to become established historiographically.⁴²

The third challenge, of defining Atlantic history, remained productively unresolved even at the zenith of Atlantic history's success. To establish its identity, some historians, like Bailyn, engaged in genealogy, to discover their ancestors and to display their pedigree, even if at some cost in constraining originality while affirming continuity. In response, others (including myself) turned to morphology, to display the family resemblances among related strains of Atlantic history.⁴³ These joint efforts may have briefly shaped the course of the field, just before its identity was once more subsumed into broader currents of historical inquiry. Sometimes, the best way to go forward is to look backwards; in the remainder of this chapter, I will suggest three new routes for Atlantic history, in light of recent oceanic history more broadly, and building on my earlier effort to dissect the field.

Three (More) Concepts of Atlantic History

Fifteen years ago, I proposed three concepts of Atlantic history to anatomise existing approaches and to point up prospective pathways for the field: these were *circum*-Atlantic history, *trans*-Atlantic history and *cis*-Atlantic history.⁴⁴ By *circum*-Atlantic history, I meant 'the history of the Atlantic as a particular zone of exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission': in short, Atlantic history as transnational history.⁴⁵ *Trans*-Atlantic history is 'the history of the Atlantic world told through comparisons' between empires, nations, states and similar communities

⁴¹ Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and history: The evolution of a nineteenth-century Atlantic economy* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); Douglas R. Egerton, 'Rethinking Atlantic historiography in a postcolonial era. The Civil War in a global perspective', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 1 (2011): 79–95; Robert E. Bonner, 'The salt water Civil War: Thalassological approaches, ocean-centered opportunities', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 6 (2016): 243–67; Donna Gabaccia, 'A long Atlantic in a wider world', *Atlantic Studies*, 1 (2004): 10–12.

⁴² Emma Rothschild, 'Late Atlantic history', in Canny and Morgan, eds., *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic world, 1450–1850*, p. 647; for exceptions, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic crossings: Social politics in a progressive age* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), and the essays in the fourth part of Falola and Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic world, 1450–2000*, pp. 275–358 ('Globalization and its discontents'), on the twentieth-century Atlantic world.

⁴³ Bernard Bailyn, 'The idea of Atlantic history', *Itinerario*, 22 (1996): 19–44, revised and expanded in Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, pp. 1–56; O'Reilly, 'Genealogies of Atlantic history'.

⁴⁴ Armitage, 'Three concepts of Atlantic history', 17–29.

⁴⁵ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the dead: Circum-Atlantic performance* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), was the source of the term.

or formations, such as cities or plantations – that is, Atlantic history as international, interregional or, as we might now say, inter-polity history.⁴⁶ And cis-Atlantic history comprises ‘the history of any particular place – a nation, a state, a region, even a specific institution – in relation to the wider Atlantic world’, or Atlantic history conceived as local history and even as microhistory.⁴⁷

This typology was not exhaustive and I intended the three categories to be mutually reinforcing: circum-Atlantic history made trans-Atlantic history possible and both depended on cis-Atlantic histories; these emerged in turn from circum- and trans-Atlantic connections and circulations. At the time, and for many years after, they adequately captured the bulk of work conducted as the history of an Atlantic world that was largely defined against inter-oceanic and global connections, conceived of as a holistic, multi-continental system and viewed as the sum of experiences above the waves and on the territories adjoining and within the Atlantic Ocean. By now, they no longer seem as comprehensive as they once did, not least because they were derived mostly inductively, from existing practices within Atlantic history itself.

The evolution of oceanic history in the last decade suggests a pressing need to extend my original trichotomy to take account of more recent developments, within and beyond Atlantic history, and to imagine new prospects for Atlantic history itself. With these goals in mind, let me offer three *more* concepts of Atlantic history in addition to my original triad:

1. *Infra-Atlantic* history – the subregional history of the Atlantic world.
2. *Sub-Atlantic* history – the submarine history of the Atlantic world.
3. *Extra-Atlantic* history – the supraregional history of the Atlantic world.

My aim in the latter part of this chapter is to describe each approach, with examples drawn from Atlantic history and its historiographical neighbours, to account for their significance and to suggest how each

⁴⁶ I take the term ‘inter-polity’ from the work of Lauren Benton and Adam Clulow: for example, Benton and Clulow, ‘Legal encounters and the origins of global law’, in Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *The Cambridge world history*, VI, 2: *The construction of a global world, 1400–1800 CE: Patterns of change* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 80–100.

⁴⁷ Lara Putnam, ‘To study the fragments/whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic world’, *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2006): 615–30. For self-consciously cis-Atlantic histories, see, for example, Stephen K. Roberts, ‘Cromwellian towns in the Severn basin: A contribution to cis-Atlantic history?’, in Patrick Little, ed., *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 165–87; Daniel Walden, ‘America’s first coastal community: A cis- and circumatlantic reading of John Smith’s *The Generall Historie of Virginia*’, *Atlantic Studies*, 7 (2010): 329–47; Steven A. Sarson, *The tobacco-plantation South in the early American Atlantic world* (Basingstoke, 2013).

can draw Atlantic history into closer and more productive dialogue with other oceanic histories. These three new concepts, supplement but do not supplant my earlier trichotomy. Taken together, they can offer novel ways to re-energise the field of Atlantic history and to increase its integration with other areas of historical analysis.

Infra-Atlantic History

Infra-Atlantic history is the inverse of circum-Atlantic history as ‘the history of the ocean as an arena distinct from any of the particular, narrower, oceanic zones that comprise it’.⁴⁸ In contrast to that integrative approach, it focuses instead on those more specific and bounded regions that flow into or abut upon the larger ocean but which have their own integrity as islands and archipelagos, littorals and beaches, straits, gulfs and seas in their own right. It is the history of the peoples who inhabited these sub-regions, who lived by the sea or pursued maritime lives in coastal and insular waters. This is not the Atlantic as a congeries of cis-Atlantic histories, because there is no assumption that those places should be connected to a larger circuit of communication. Nor is it the Atlantic as a ‘world’ or a ‘system’ but instead as a series of distinct spaces and the competing visions that emerged from them. To paraphrase a distinction Greg Denning made for Pacific history, it is history *in* the Atlantic rather than history *of* the Atlantic.⁴⁹

Infra-Atlantic history draws inspiration from adjacent oceanic histories that have also attempted to break down wider oceans into their component parts. As Jonathan Miran notes in his essay on the Red Sea in this volume, ‘most maritime spaces are innately fractured, fragmented and unstable arenas’; with this, he affirms the argument of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell that the Mediterranean should be spared from Braudelian synthesis by decomposition into many microecologies or Sugata Bose’s similar claims in favour of the dizzyingly various ‘hundred horizons’ visible in the Indian Ocean arena.⁵⁰ It has been suggested that the future of global history in an age of resurgent nationalism, populism and anti-globalism lies in narrating disintegration as well as

⁴⁸ Armitage, ‘Three concepts of Atlantic history’, 18.

⁴⁹ Greg Denning, ‘History “in” the Pacific’, *The Contemporary Pacific*, 1 (1989): 134–39; compare Blakemore, ‘The changing fortunes of Atlantic history’: 862, on the attendant ‘risk of losing the impulse to search for connections across boundaries or on an Atlantic scale’ that might come with history ‘in’ rather than ‘of’ the Atlantic.

⁵⁰ Miran, ‘The Red Sea’, in this volume, p. 000; Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The corrupting sea: A study of Mediterranean history* (Oxford, 2000); Sugata Bose, *A hundred horizons: The Indian Ocean in the age of global empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

integration.⁵¹ On this view, a segmented Atlantic has as much to reveal as a coordinated one. This is because it is more likely to reflect particular experiences than to fall into the traps of Eurocentrism – the assumption that the Atlantic was a European preserve or invention – or whiggism, the premise that Atlantic integration was inevitable, even irreversible.

Infra-Atlantic history can be discovered first throughout the islands of the Atlantic. That search takes us back to one possible root of the term ‘Atlantic’ itself. Around 355 BCE, Plato in the *Timaeus* imagined the island empire of Atlantis, in the western ocean beyond the Mediterranean ‘frog-pond’, which warred with Athens before disappearing in a cataclysmic flood. The first European voyager into the Atlantic lent his myth fresh plausibility – or, at least, utility in accounting for earlier links with the Americas – though it later became a western analogue to the Indian Ocean’s Lemuria, a sunken superpower around which identities later swirled.⁵² The first recorded westward explorer of the Atlantic was Plato’s near-contemporary, the island-hopping Pytheas of Massalia (Marseille), who made it to Britain, Orkney and Shetland and possibly even Iceland in the fourth century BCE.⁵³ Long thereafter, the Atlantic would be a realm of imaginary islands – the Fortunate Isles, St Brendan’s Isle, the Island of the Seven Cities and Ultima Thule, among others – before Europeans learned that it was indeed a sea fringed with many insular formations, from Orkney and Shetland in the north to the Canaries and the Azores in mid-Atlantic and the Greater and Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean.⁵⁴ All had their own infra-Atlantic histories before trans-Atlantic contact and their inhabitants would continue to live such histories even when they became more deeply implicated in an emergent Atlantic world.

The Atlantic gradually came into focus as a sea *with* islands, but was it also a sea *of* islands? Pacific studies prompt the question.⁵⁵ In that oceanic history, the paradigm of a sea of islands expresses Indigenous

⁵¹ Jeremy Adelman, ‘What is global history now?’, *Aeon Magazine* (2 March 2017): <https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment> (accessed 31 March 2017).

⁵² *Plato’s Atlantis story: Text, translation and commentary*, ed. Christopher Gill (Liverpool, 2017); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Atlantis story: A short history of Plato’s myth*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Exeter, 2007), pp. 56–62; Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The lost land of Lemuria: Fabulous geographies, catastrophic histories* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

⁵³ Barry Cunliffe, *The extraordinary voyage of Pytheas the Greek* (London, 2001).

⁵⁴ John R. Gillis, *Islands of the mind: How the human imagination created the Atlantic world* (Basingstoke, 2004); compare Andrew Jennings, Silke Reeploeg and Angela Watt, eds., *Northern Atlantic islands and the sea: Seascapes and dreamscapes* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017).

⁵⁵ Paul D’Arcy, ‘The Atlantic and Pacific worlds’, in Coffman, Leonard and O’Reilly, eds., *The Atlantic world*, pp. 207–26; Damon Salesa, ‘Opposite footers’, in Fullagar, ed., *The Atlantic world in the antipodes*, pp. 283–300.

consciousness of attachment and importance; it reframes as plenitude what outsiders put down as the absence or insignificance of territories in the ‘Earth’s empty quarter’.⁵⁶ There were no Indigenous Atlantic equivalents to the immense colonising voyages of the Polynesian navigators, which made islands into stepping-stones across vast oceanic expanses. The ‘Atlantic Mediterranean’, populated by islands from the Canaries to the Azores and joined together by Atlantic winds, could hardly compare with these, though the Caribbean islands and the adjacent coastal regions of southern North America and northern South America have a claim to be a ‘trans-oceanic Mediterranean’ or even an ‘Atlantic Oceania’, albeit on a far smaller scale than anything within the Pacific.⁵⁷ Territories such as Ascension Island, Tristan da Cunha and St Helena remained remote from each other and from the five continents until well into the twentieth century, and for much of the eighteenth century, St Helena had functioned as a gateway to the Indian Ocean world while the Falkland Islands ‘open[ed] ... facilities of passing into the Pacifick Ocean’.⁵⁸ These were islands *in* the Atlantic, but not quite *of* it.

Mediating *between* the Atlantic, its islands and the lands that surround it are its coasts and beaches. All maritime activity begins from these regions where land and sea meet but their potential within Atlantic history has only just begun to be explored.⁵⁹ Within the historiography of the Pacific, the beach holds a special place as a metaphor for the meeting of cultures and a space where mutual understandings and misunderstandings were performed and identities continually reshaped.⁶⁰ The beach has not functioned as illuminatingly in Atlantic historiography,

⁵⁶ Epeli Hau’ofa, ‘Our sea of islands’ (1993), in Hau’ofa, *We are the ocean: Selected works* (Honolulu, HI, 2008), pp. 27–40; R. G. Ward, ‘Earth’s empty quarter? Pacific islands in a Pacific world’, *The Geographical Journal*, 155 (1989): 235–46.

⁵⁷ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and colonisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229–1492* (Basingstoke, 1987), p. 152; David Abulafia, ‘Mediterraneans’, in W. V. Harris, ed., *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 82–85; John R. Gillis, ‘Islands in the making of an Atlantic Oceania, 1500–1800’, in Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: Maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges* (Honolulu, HI, 2007), pp. 21–37. On the Caribbean, compare Joshua Jelly-Schapiro, *Island people: The Caribbean and the world* (New York, 2016), pt. II, ‘The Lesser Antilles: Sea of islands’.

⁵⁸ John McAleer, ‘Looking East: St Helena, the South Atlantic and Britain’s Indian Ocean world’, *Atlantic Studies*, 13 (2016): 78–98; George Anson, *A voyage around the world, in the years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV*, ed. Richard Walter (London, 1748), p. 92, cit. *ibid.*, 79, on the Falklands. On the importance of islands more generally, the classic work remains Richard H. Grove, *Green imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens, and the origins of environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁵⁹ For more general inspiration, see Alison Bashford, ‘Terraqueous histories’, *The Historical Journal*, 60 (2017): 253–73.

⁶⁰ Greg Denning, *Beach crossings: Voyaging across times, cultures and self* (Carlton, Vic., 2004).

perhaps because of a later European association with the seaside as a location for leisure and pleasure, aesthetics and athletics.⁶¹ Infra-Atlantic history might restore significance to such spaces by doing what Henry David Thoreau punningly called '*littorally* . . . walking down to the shore, and throwing your line into the Atlantic', to look for more local and bounded objects of study where the 'ocean is but a larger lake'.⁶² Here were points of interaction between the human and the natural (especially protein-rich resources such as fish) and between land and sea – oceanic histories in miniature, in effect.

The histories of frontiers and borderlands have been largely terrestrial and located within the interiors of continents but there is great potential for examination of the 'saltwater frontier' where incomers and indigenes, especially, met from the early fifteenth century in Africa and from the early sixteenth century onwards in the Americas, both Caribbean and continental. Exchange and interchange, followed often by conflict and dispossession, took place first in these liminal spaces, as native habitations were transformed into bridgeheads for settlers to protect themselves by sea or project their power over land, for example along the eastern seaboard of seventeenth-century North America.⁶³ 'The American coasts can be said to have been Europe's initial New World frontier', and that idea can be extended around the edges of the Atlantic world, especially along its western shores.⁶⁴

Infra-Atlantic history extends well beyond the moment of early interactions. After the initial period of encounter and occupation, European powers attempted to integrate new territories and subjects into their networks of sovereignty and authority. Imperial entanglement was always incomplete because a patchwork of corridors and enclaves rendered empires uneven in their penetration and, like any network, made up as much of holes as linkages. Within the Atlantic world, coasts, rivers, estuaries and islands were sites for the elaboration of empire, both on the fringes of continents and in archipelagos like the West Indies where empires competed for control cheek by jowl with one another in contested 'interpolity microregions' well into the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ When

⁶¹ Alain Corbin, *The lure of the sea: The discovery of the seaside in the western world, 1750–1840*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Cambridge, 1994).

⁶² Henry D. Thoreau, *Cape Cod* (1865), ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton, NJ, 1988), pp. 92, 98.

⁶³ Andrew Lipman, *The saltwater frontier: Indians and the contest for the American coast* (New Haven, CT, 2015).

⁶⁴ John R. Gillis, *The human shore: Seacoasts in history* (Chicago, IL, 2012), p. 91.

⁶⁵ Lauren Benton, *A search for sovereignty: Law and geography in European empire, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2010); Jeppe Mulich, 'Microregionalism and intercolonial relations: The case of the Danish West Indies, 1730–1830', *Journal of Global History*, 8 (2013): 72–94;

examined at this granular level of micro-regions, infra-Atlantic history shows that two features of Atlantic history usually assumed to have an elective affinity, connectivity and integration, were only contingently related: to be enmeshed within Atlantic networks was not necessarily to be part of an ever more entangled Atlantic world. Yet infra-Atlantic history, may still appear superficial, in the literal sense of the term. Like most species of Atlantic history, it starts on the surface of land and ocean and builds upwards and outwards from there. To go deeper, we need to consider ‘sub-Atlantic’ history.

Sub-Atlantic History

Sub-Atlantic history is history from below – not in the traditional, social-historical, meaning of that phrase as the history of those beneath the elites, but rather as history that took place ‘below the water line’ or ‘below the waves’.⁶⁶ The term ‘sub-Atlantic’ seems to have emerged at that pivotal moment in the middle of the nineteenth century when the two Atlantics were increasingly united by the advent of steam navigation and when the telegraph joined both sides of the Atlantic for the first time: for example, the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s earliest instances of ‘subatlantic’ come from 1854 and 1875, respectively: ‘subatlantic telegraphy’ and the ‘subatlantic cable enterprise’.⁶⁷ More recently, the word has been invoked, with reference to Caribbean thinkers such as Édouard Glissant and the late Derek Walcott, to cover the realm of ‘the sub-Atlantic as a repository of historical memory’.⁶⁸ Sub-Atlantic history can cover all these senses and more, to denote the world beneath the waves of the Atlantic, its currents, sea-floor and waters, as well as the denizens of marine ecosystems, human interactions with the natural world of the Atlantic, and the history that took place *within* the ocean itself.⁶⁹

Benton and Mulich, ‘The space between empires: Coastal and insular microregions in the early nineteenth-century world’, in Paul Stock, ed., *The uses of space in early modern history* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 152.

⁶⁶ Marcus Rediker, ‘History from below the water line: Sharks and the Atlantic slave trade’, *Atlantic Studies*, 5 (2008): 285–97; Ryan Tucker Jones, ‘Running into whales: The history of the North Pacific from below the waves’, *American Historical Review*, 118 (2013): 349–77.

⁶⁷ *OED*, s.v., ‘sub-Atlantic’.

⁶⁸ James Delbourgo, ‘Divers things: Collecting the world under water’, *History of Science*, 49 (2011): 162; see *ibid.*, 167, on ‘a sub-Atlantic unity made by the deaths of Africans’ in the poetry of Derek Walcott.

⁶⁹ More generally, see John Gillis and Franziska Torma, eds., *Fluid frontiers: New currents in marine environmental history* (Cambridge, 2015).

Sub-Atlantic history remedies the striking absence of ‘one area of inquiry ... from Atlantic history: the ocean itself’, considered as ‘a single oceanic unit, a huge bioregion differentiated by human activities at different rates in specific subregions’.⁷⁰ It can be an adjunct to infra-Atlantic history, as the examination of a particular segment of the ocean and its interactions with animals, land and humans, an approach exemplified in Jeffrey Bolster’s richly illuminating history of the fishing banks of the Northwestern Atlantic.⁷¹ Oceans may appear to be timeless, the profound and unchanging stage for what, in Braudelian terms, might appear to be the spume of events on the crest of its waves. By contrast, sub-Atlantic history reveals the history of the sea as a variable and shifting entity transformed by human activity (for example, through overfishing or by polluting) as well as by more overarching processes like climate change. Sub-Atlantic history accordingly brings Atlantic history more fully into alignment with environmental history as a whole.⁷²

Sub-Atlantic history should also encompass the histories of activities beneath the ocean. The Atlantic does not have the same large migratory populations of aquatic animals on the scale of the Pacific, with its whales, fish and pinnipeds, for example; human migration and settlement in pursuit of those creatures has not shaped Atlantic history to the same degree as it has the human history of the Pacific.⁷³ However, humans have long hunted whales up into the high Arctic reaches of the Atlantic and demands for protein from dried fish determined sailing and settlement patterns in the North Atlantic and colonial linkages between New England and the Caribbean (for provisioning the enslaved population) in the eighteenth century.⁷⁴ Access to the products of mammals and fish thereby shaped forms of Atlantic integration for centuries, as did the winds and currents of the basin until the advent of steam. Much Atlantic history has taken for granted the ocean and its inhabitants that

⁷⁰ Jeffrey Bolster, ‘Putting the ocean in Atlantic history: Maritime communities and marine ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500–1800’, *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008): 21, 24.

⁷¹ Jeffrey Bolster, *The mortal sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the age of sail* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

⁷² For an important overview, see J. R. McNeill, ‘The ecological Atlantic’, in Canny and Morgan, eds., *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic world, 1450–1850*, pp. 289–304.

⁷³ Jones, ‘Running into whales’.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, David J. Starkey, ‘Fish and fisheries in the Atlantic world’, in Coffman, Leonard and O’Reilly, eds., *The Atlantic world*, pp. 55–75; Peter E. Pope, *Fish into wine: The Newfoundland plantation in the seventeenth century* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); Christopher P. Magra, *The fisherman’s cause: Atlantic commerce and maritime dimensions of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 2009).

drove these developments. Future Atlantic historians will want to look *at* the ocean, as well as across it, to discern its true historical dimensions.

Consciousness of the ocean *qua* ocean also forms part of sub-Atlantic history. Because most white inhabitants of the Atlantic world until the early nineteenth century shared a post-Roman prejudice against swimming, 'it is most certain that the *Indians*, and the Negroes excel[led] all others in [the] Arts of Swimming and Diving'. For this reason, Africans, African Americans and Native Americans were on the leading edge of submarine knowledge-gathering in the Atlantic, for example working to recover specimens for Sir Hans Sloane in Jamaica, diving for pearls or salvaging materials from wrecks.⁷⁵ They were also more likely to fall victim to ferocious fauna like sharks: 'the shark and the slave trade had gone together from the beginning'.⁷⁶ More generally, while the geography of the Atlantic was reasonably well known by the late sixteenth century, its oceanography and hydrography only began to be explored in the late eighteenth century. Before then, although fishermen and sailors possessed vernacular understandings of the winds and waters of the Atlantic and its animal populations, exploration of the ocean was confined to coastal waters. The first deep-sea sounding of the Atlantic took place from HMS *Racehorse* in the Norwegian Sea in 1773 but major scientific work on the deep ocean did not take off until the late nineteenth century, with the *Challenger* expedition of 1872–76.⁷⁷ The invention of sonar allowed much deeper investigation and led, in the 1950s, to the great achievement of Marie Tharp and Bruce Heezen in mapping the mid-Atlantic ridge – a breakthrough not just for sub-Atlantic history but also for the emergent theory of plate tectonics.⁷⁸ More than half a century later, the Atlantic, like much of the rest of the world's deep oceans, still remains largely uncharted territory – an inner space awaiting scientific exploration, but also ripe for historical investigation as well.

⁷⁵ Delbourgo, 'Divers things'; Kevin Dawson, 'Enslaved swimmers and divers in the Atlantic world', *Journal of American History*, 92 (2006): 1327–55; Melchisédec Thévénot, *The art of swimming: Illustrated by proper figures with advice for bathing* (London, 1699), sig. [A11]; quoted, *ibid.*, 1333.

⁷⁶ Rediker, 'History from below the water line', 286.

⁷⁷ Richard Ellis, *Deep Atlantic: Life, death, and exploration in the abyss* (New York, 1996); Helen Rozwadowski, *Fathoming the ocean: The discovery and exploration of the deep sea* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); R. M. Corfield, *The silent landscape: The scientific voyage of HMS Challenger* (Washington, DC, 2005); Michael S. Reidy, *Tides of history: Ocean science and her majesty's navy* (Chicago, IL, 2008); Reidy and Rozwadowski, 'The spaces in between: Science, ocean, empire', *Isis*, 105 (2014): 338–51.

⁷⁸ Bruce C. Heezen, Marie Tharp and Maurice Ewing, *The floors of the oceans: I, The North Atlantic*, The Geological Society of America, Special paper, 65 (1959); Hali Felt, *Soundings: The story of the remarkable woman who mapped the ocean floor* (New York, 2012).

The world beneath the waves of the Atlantic may be the least developed form of Atlantic history for the moment. However, it is likely to burgeon as oceanic history becomes more deeply shaped by environmental history. The non-human history of the Atlantic – the historical study not only of its other creatures, but of its waters and winds and how they have in turn interacted with human activity – is only likely to expand, as we can already see from recent work on Caribbean hurricanes, for instance.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the world beneath the waves – shipwrecks, drowning, the imagining of the depths – is already attracting literary attention.⁸⁰ The submarine realm may be the final frontier for Atlantic history but advances in history from below the waves in other oceanic historiographies suggest its time will soon come, especially as it combines with emerging work on the exploitation, management and governance of the oceans in other fields.⁸¹ When it does, it will be one more means to join Atlantic history with adjacent oceanic histories. To see the promise of that conjunctive turn, we now turn finally to my third and last additional concept, *extra-Atlantic* history.

Extra-Atlantic History

Extra-Atlantic history is the history of the Atlantic told through its linkages with other oceans and seas.⁸² On its eastern side, it opens into the Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar; on the western shore, only the isthmus of Panama, less than 80 kilometres at its narrowest, separated it from – or linked it to – the Pacific before the digging of the Panama Canal. Like the Pacific, the Atlantic is part of the Great Ocean Conveyor Belt and its climate is subject to the variations of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation.⁸³ At its southern extremes, the Atlantic joins the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean; and thanks to climate change and the retreat of the ice, the widening North-West Passage will soon link the Atlantic with the Pacific through the Arctic Ocean again. As sub-Atlantic history reveals, and as this volume repeatedly proves, the

⁷⁹ Greg Bankoff, 'Aeolian empires: The influence of winds and currents on European maritime expansion in the age of sail', *Environment and History*, 23 (2017): 163–96; Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624–1783* (Baltimore, MD, 2009); Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sea of storms: A history of hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina* (Princeton, NJ, 2015).

⁸⁰ For example, Steve Mentz, *At the bottom of Shakespeare's ocean* (London, 2009); Mentz, *Shipwreck modernity: Ecologies of globalization, 1550–1719* (Minneapolis, MN, 2015).

⁸¹ John Hannigan, *The geopolitics of deep oceans* (Cambridge, 2016).

⁸² Peter Coclanis has called this 'Conjuncto-Atlantic' history: Coclanis, 'Atlantic world or Atlantic/world?', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 739.

⁸³ Zalasiewicz and Williams, *Ocean worlds*, p. 89.

oceanographic connections among the oceans ensure that any attempt to separate them will be artificial and constraining. There is a myth of oceans as well as a myth of continents.⁸⁴ The means to break such myths is by acknowledging those continuities. Oceans connect.⁸⁵ Atlantic history links to many other oceanic histories. If taken in isolation, its own history might simply appear to be arbitrarily infra-oceanic. And if the Atlantic is too large to capture some historical processes, it is certainly too small to encompass those that operated on interoceanic, trans-regional and global scales.

From the fifteenth century onwards, historical actors would never have mistaken the Atlantic for a discrete oceanic realm. For Columbus, what would later be known as the Atlantic was a gateway to Asia, an alternative to a Mediterranean and trans-continental route increasingly blocked by the Ottoman Empire. His successors in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who sought a North-West Passage likewise assumed the Atlantic was not bounded and land-locked. Throughout the early modern world, globe-trotting cosmopolitans – sailors, soldiers, merchants, clerics, pilgrims and the like – moved between oceanic worlds, Mediterranean, Atlantic and Indian Ocean.⁸⁶ Slave-traders and planters who carried forms of staple production and of enforced labour from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic islands across the ocean assumed – like promoters of import substitution for goods like wine, olives and silk from Richard Hakluyt to John Locke and beyond – that climate connected the Atlantic Americas with the lands around the Mediterranean in southern Europe and North Africa. With the large-scale extraction of silver from mines in Mexico and Peru, the first empire on which the sun never set – the Spanish Monarchy – became the vehicle for the first circuit of early modern globalisation with the Manila galleons as its conveyor-belt from 1571 to 1815.⁸⁷ When the Philippines were administered from the viceroyalty of New Spain, it was clear even by the late sixteenth century that the Hispanic Atlantic world extended far across the Pacific. Indeed, in

⁸⁴ Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The myth of continents: A critique of metageography* (Berkeley, CA, 1997); Philip E. Steinberg, *The social construction of the ocean* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁸⁵ Kären E. Wigen and Jessica Harland-Jacobs, eds., ‘Special issue: Oceans connect’, *Geographical Review*, 89, 2 (April 1999); Rila Mukherjee, ed., *Oceans connect: Reflections on water worlds across time and space* (Delhi, 2013).

⁸⁶ Alison Games, ‘Beyond the Atlantic: English globetrotters and transoceanic connections’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 675–92; Games, *The web of Empire: English cosmopolitans in an age of expansion, 1560–1660* (Oxford, 2008); Emma Rothschild, *The inner life of empires: An eighteenth-century history* (Princeton, NJ, 2011).

⁸⁷ Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, ‘Born with a “silver spoon”: The origin of world trade in 1571’, *Journal of World History*, 6 (1995): 201–21.

the eyes of European powers well into the eighteenth century, the North American continent remained a geopolitical bridge between the Atlantic and Pacific worlds.⁸⁸

The political economy of empires and transnational trading companies likewise shaped the linkages between the Atlantic and other oceanic regions. The English East India Company could not have functioned in the Indian Ocean without its Atlantic outpost on St Helena; its Scottish successor and competitor, the short-lived Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies of the late seventeenth century, proposed a bi-hemispheric vision of global trade centred on the Isthmus of Darién (hence its popular name, the Darien Company).⁸⁹ Until the opening of the Suez Canal, the Cape of Good Hope was the pivot between the Atlantic world and the Indian Ocean, a ‘tavern of the seas’ where empires joined and oceans connected: up until 1869, the two oceanic worlds could not be distinguished.⁹⁰ Commodities such as rice, indigo and breadfruit were transplanted from the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean into the Atlantic as staples for settlers and the enslaved and products for intercontinental commerce; the tea dumped into Boston harbour on the eve of the American Revolution came from China to North America in East India Company ships. Later demands for labour especially after emancipation, drew Chinese and Indian workers into the region, joining Atlantic migration to global circuits of mobility and transportation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹¹ It was only in the twentieth century that the Atlantic was perceived to be a ‘world’, entire of itself, and distinct from global history more generously conceived. Now is the

⁸⁸ Paul W. Mapp, *The elusive west and the contest for Empire, 1713–1763* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011).

⁸⁹ Philip J. Stern, ‘British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparisons and connections’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 693–712; Stern, ‘Politics and ideology in the early East India Company-State: The case of St. Helena, 1673–1696’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35 (2007): 1–23; Douglas Watt, *The price of Scotland: Darien, union and the wealth of nations* (Edinburgh, 2006).

⁹⁰ Kerry Ward, ‘“Tavern of the seas”? The Cape of Good Hope as an oceanic crossroads during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, in Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären E. Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: Maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges* (Honolulu, HI, 2007), pp. 137–52; Gerald Groenewald, ‘Southern Africa and the Atlantic world’, in Coffman, Leonard and O’Reilly, eds., *The Atlantic world*, pp. 100–16.

⁹¹ Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of empire: Capital, slavery, and Indian indentured labor migration in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, PA, 1998); Adam McKeown, ‘Global migration, 1846–1940’, *Journal of World History*, 15 (2004): 155–89; Donna R. Gabaccia and Dirk Hoerder, eds., *Connecting seas and connected ocean rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden, 2011); Reed Ueda, *Crosscurrents: Atlantic and Pacific migration in the making of a global America* (New York, 2016).

time to reconnect it to that broader history, to bring Atlantic history out of almost one hundred years of solitude.

All three of these newer Atlantic histories, infra-Atlantic, sub-Atlantic and extra-Atlantic, expand and deepen Atlantic history, both in time – beyond its default boundaries within early modern history – and in space: beneath its surface, across its waters and into the broader reaches of the world ocean as a whole. By drawing methods and inspirations from other oceanic histories, they may help to bring Atlantic historiography into a more productive and enduring dialogue with oceanic history *tout court*. They might also provide remedies for some of the Atlantic world-weariness that has beset the field in recent years. If Atlantic history does have a future, it will be as a subset of world history viewed through the lenses of oceanic history.⁹² We are all oceanic historians now – even the avowed Atlanticists among us.

Further Reading

Among existing oceanic histories, Atlantic history is particularly well supplied with handbooks, companions and survey volumes. To experience the evolution and consolidation of the field in recent years, one could read sequentially Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic history: A critical appraisal* (Oxford, 2009); Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, eds., *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic world, 1450–1800* (Oxford, 2011); Joseph C. Miller, Vincent Brown, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Laurent Dubois and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, eds., *The Princeton companion to Atlantic history* (Princeton, NJ, 2015); and D’Maris Coffman, Adrian Leonard and William O’Reilly, eds., *The Atlantic world* (Abingdon, 2015).

Important edited collections from the earlier boom in Atlantic history include David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, 2002; 2nd edn., 2009); Horst Pietschmann, ed., *Atlantic history: History of the Atlantic system, 1580–1830* (Göttingen, 2002); Wim Klooster and Alfred Padula, eds., *The Atlantic world: Essays on slavery, migration, and imagination* (Upper Saddle

⁹² As argued by various historians in recent years: for example, Coclanis, ‘*Drang Nach Osten*’; Coclanis, ‘Atlantic world or Atlantic/world?’; Lauren Benton, ‘The British Atlantic in a global context’, in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800*, 2nd edn., pp. 271–89; Canny, ‘Atlantic history and global history’; Cécile Vidal, ‘Pour une histoire globale du monde atlantique ou des histoires connectées dans et au-delà du monde atlantique?’, *Annales HSS*, 67 (2012): 391–413.

River, NJ, 2005); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman, eds., *The Atlantic in global history, 1500–2000* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2007); James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, eds., *Science and empire in the Atlantic world* (New York, 2008); Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic world, 1450–2000* (Bloomington, IN, 2008); and Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic history: Latent structures and intellectual currents, 1500–1830* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

In 2002, I noted that Atlantic history had not yet suffered ‘death by a thousand textbooks’; the texts that soon appeared greatly helped to move the field forward, among them Douglas R. Egerton, Alison Games, Jane G. Landers, Kris Lane and Donald R. Wright, *The Atlantic world: A history, 1400–1888* (Wheeling, IL, 2007); Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic world: Europeans, Africans, Indians and their shared history, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Atlantic in world history* (Oxford, 2012); John K. Thornton, *A cultural history of the Atlantic world, 1250–1820* (Cambridge, 2012); Catherine Armstrong and Laura M. Chmielewski, *The Atlantic experience: Peoples, places, ideas* (Basingstoke, 2013); and Anna Suranyi, *The Atlantic connection: A history of the Atlantic world, 1450–1900* (Abingdon, 2015).

Atlantic history is also now well supplied with economical overviews of the field and its fortunes. See especially Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic history: Concept and contours* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); John G. Reid, ‘How wide is the Atlantic Ocean? Not wide enough!’, *Acadiensis*, 34 (2005): 81–87; Trevor Burnard, ‘Only connect: The rise and rise (and fall?) of Atlantic history’, *Historically Speaking*, 7 (2006): 19–21; Alison Games, ‘Atlantic history: Definitions, challenges, and opportunities’, *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006): 741–57; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen, ‘Hybrid Atlantics: Future directions for the history of the Atlantic world’, *History Compass*, 11, 8 (August 2013): 597–609; Richard J. Blakemore, ‘The changing fortunes of Atlantic history’, *English Historical Review*, 131 (2016): 851–68; and Michelle Craig McDonald, ‘There are still Atlanticists now: A subfield reborn’, *Journal of the Early Republic*, 36 (2016): 701–13.

The expanding possibilities for articulating Atlantic history with other histories, oceanic and global, can be tracked in David Eltis, ‘Atlantic history in global perspective’, *Itinerario*, 23 (1999): 141–61; Donna Gabaccia, ‘A long Atlantic in a wider world’, *Atlantic Studies*, 1 (2004): 1–27; Philip J. Stern, ‘British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparisons and connections’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 693–712; Paul W. Mapp, ‘Atlantic history from imperial, continental, and Pacific perspectives’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 713–24; Peter A. Coclanis, ‘Atlantic

world or Atlantic/world?', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 725–42; Lauren Benton, 'The British Atlantic in global context', in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800* (2nd edn.), pp. 271–89; Nicholas Canny, 'Atlantic history and global history' and Peter A. Coclanis, 'Beyond Atlantic history', in Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic history*, pp. 317–36, 337–56; Emma Rothschild, 'Late Atlantic history', in Canny and Morgan, eds., *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic world, 1450–1850*, pp. 634–48; Douglas R. Egerton, 'Rethinking Atlantic historiography in a postcolonial era: The Civil War in a global perspective', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 1 (2011): 79–95; Kate Fullagar, ed., *The Atlantic world in the Antipodes: Effects and transformations since the eighteenth century* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012); Cécile Vidal, 'Pour une histoire globale du monde atlantique ou des histoires connectées dans et au-delà du monde atlantique?', *Annales HSS*, 67 (2012): 391–413; Paul D'Arcy, 'The Atlantic and Pacific worlds', in Coffman, Leonard and O'Reilly, eds., *The Atlantic world*, pp. 207–26; Christoph Strobel, *The global Atlantic 1400 to 1900* (Abingdon, 2015); and John McAleer, 'Looking east: St Helena, the South Atlantic and Britain's Indian Ocean world', *Atlantic Studies*, 13 (2016): 78–98.

The Atlantic Ocean is the second largest of the world's oceans with a total area of about 106,460,000 square kilometers (41,100,000 square miles).^{[2][3]} It covers approximately 20 percent of the Earth's surface and about 29 percent of its water surface area. It separates the "Old World" from the "New World". The Atlantic Ocean occupies an elongated, S-shaped basin extending longitudinally between Eurasia and Africa to the east, and the Americas to the west. The Atlantic Ocean is the second-largest of the world's oceanic divisions; with a total area of about 41.1 million square miles (106.4 million square kilometers), it covers approximately one-fifth of the Earth's surface. Its name, derived from Greek mythology, means the "Sea of Atlas." The Atlantic Ocean occupies an elongated, S-shaped basin extending longitudinally between the Americas to the west, and Eurasia and Africa to the east.