In his *Introducción al Ensayo Cronológico para la historia general de la Florida* (1722, _Ensayo_ from here on), Andrés Gonzáles de Barcia sounds the alarm against what he terms the dangerous errors, confusions, and inventions by malicious foreign writers who, he laments, fabricate preposterous representations of Florida. The *Ensayo* accompanied the re-edition of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s *La Florida del Inca* (1617). This was the second of thirty-four texts on the exploration and conquest of the Indies that Barcia re-edited between 1720 and 1743. With works like Antonio de Herrera’s and Francisco López de Gómara’s chronicles, Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga’s epic poem on Chile, León Pinelo’s cosmographic treatise, and the “Cartas de relación” by Christopher Columbus, and Hernán Cortés, among others, Barcia’s massive editorial project organized and conceptualized the literature, historiography, and cosmography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into a foundation for the colonial literary corpus. What our editor finds problematic with what he considers egregious blunders that challenge Spanish possession of the area, above all, is “*quando esta verbal distinción, se ve trasladada en las Cartas, y en las Historias, que causa el gran daño*” [sic] (xxv). In other words, he finds highly threatening the displacement from letter to grid.

The extensive catalog of texts that Barcia offers as proof of Spanish territorial claims to the region has served historians and literary critics as a comprehensive historiographical source for scholarship down to the present. Critics have situated his scholarly venture in the context of the

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1. For this study I have made use of the 1723 edition of this work.

2. Arcadio Guerra Guerra reminds us that together with Juan Baptista Muñoz (Royal Cosmographer), and Martín Fernandez de Navarrete (hydrographer and historian of maritime exploration), Barcia’s work formed part of triad on which rested the study of early colonial history (106-7). In the most comprehensive study of Barcia’s oeuvre to date, Jonathan Earl Carlyon points to the key role of his scholarship within this circle and also for intellectuals of the Spanish Enlightenment like Gregorio Mayans, among others (20).
dispute between Spanish historiography and the French, English, Dutch, Danes, and Swedes over territorial precedence in the discoveries in the Indies (Guerra Guerra, Carlyon, Cañizares Esguerra). At the time of the Ensayo’s publication (1722) there was no specific, direct threat to Florida by any European power. Yet, each of the European powers in the eighteenth century was at great pains to craft a fantasy of absolute sovereignty over the fragmented territories under (and, at times, outside) their dominion. Monarchies struggled with the impossibility of bringing universal sovereign rights and territorial claims into alignment. As Lauren Benton aptly reminds us, imperial sovereignty in this era was an elusive, incomplete process in which claims of sovereign jurisdiction (imperium) and the right to possess territory (dominium) remained imprecisely defined (4-5). And the territoriality of empire relied on the stitching together of its heterogeneous, scattered component spaces by the work of official literature, cartography, and historiography. What Matthew Edney says of geography—“an intertextual web of discursive practices that underscores the Enlightenment ideology of encyclopedic knowledge,” for all its epistemological shortcomings in practice, (165-66)—can be said with all the more reason of the interdisciplinary dialectic at work in the service of forging an imperial totality. To accomplish cohesiveness, apologists for imperial absolutism belonging to all the various factions set about rearranging the existing meta-geographies that supported the claims of their sponsors, in particular, the re-delineation of continents into political entities aligned with imperial aspirations.

A reconsideration of Barcia’s Ensayo reveals that his warning points, rather, to a crisis of representation largely overlooked by critics. Specifically, the editor fears the operations performed by French mapmakers, which

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3 Barcia’s most vigorous critic, Luis de Salazar Castro, sees the long catalog that the editor cites as more a vice than a necessity (7). With the end of the War of the Quadruple Alliance, the French had returned Pensacola and the remaining conquests in the north of the Iberian continent to Spain in exchange for commercial benefits. The conflicts in the Carolinas were stalled until 1725 by appeal to the Treaty of Madrid of 1670, in which England and Spain adopted the principle of actual possession to set up boundaries for the territories. The profound trepidation towards the Georgia colony in Georgia and Oglethorpe’s expansionism would wait until the following decade (Trevor Richard Reese 55). And Bourbon rule eased relations between Spain and France.

4 A comprehensive study of these terms reveals that often authors remained imprecise in their use, and its definition shifted according to political ends. David Armitage finds that the merging of dominium and imperium was at the center of British imperial ideology (94).
 amounted to a re-continentalization of the Spanish Indies. The reconceptualization of “The Indies” as “America” constitutes the larger ideological framework within which Barcia’s editorial crusade is best understood. While the scale of that framework exceeds the scope of this essay, it must be taken into account contextually and can be explored through the work of such scholars as Edmundo O’Gorman, Germán Arciniegas, and J. H. Elliot.

Jonathan Carlyon points out that Barcia employs his commentary like a director his stage cues: to instruct the scholar in the methodology for proper reading (147).
descriptive geography. This mode of representation of space was concurrent with the cartographic explosion brought by the deluge of new knowledge that resulted from the assimilation of the Indies to European cosmography. Merging space and history, authors in the Hispanic world appealed to prose or poetic description of spaces to assert the place of their localities at a time of territorial expansion on both sides of the Atlantic. Barcia’s Ensayo charges readers with a hermeneutical mission: to fashion diverse “noticias” into a coherent picture that renders territorial possession vivid. While title and framework of the narrative announce a temporal methodology, spatiality permeates the final mandate.

Armed with a hermeneutical plan grounded in the interpretation of the particular, Barcia elevates Florida’s metageographical status, as it were, from peninsula to an unprecedented continent by deploying the first set of “individuales noticias de los Sucesos de aquel dilatado Continente” to address the names ascribed to the region (xxv). Toponyms serve him as mediation for dominium. In the discussion, indigenous names are dismissed on the grounds that they mistakenly circumscribe the area to a province. Instead, Juan Ponce de León, the region’s first European explorer, provides Barcia with confirmation for his novel metageographical claim. The early description of the region preserved in the Inca Garcilaso’s La Florida del Inca confirms that Ponce de León gave the region a “Nombre universal” in commemoration of Easter [Pascua de flores] (xxvi). In sometimes contradictory fashion, Barcia finds additional support for his claim of a cohesive, uninterrupted geopolitical expanse in a wide array of literary forerunners. Sebastián Fernández de Oviedo, for instance, delineates it as an extensive region but makes this land part of New France or Canada, placing the latter as a constitutive part of the former, while his followers in the succeeding centuries acknowledge its division into the provinces of Panuco, Avavares, Albardeos, and Tegasta (xxix). Francisco de Gómara delimits the territory as extending from the Punta de Bacalaos to the Panuco river—the border that the cosmographer to Charles V and Philip II, Alonso de Santa Cruz, established for New Spain.\footnote{Antonio de Santa Cruz’s “Mapa del Golfo y costa de la Nueva España” (1572?) is available through the Library of Congress’s collection.} In contrast, the confusing proliferation of names advanced by foreign authors for the region impeded the understanding of the region as a spacious landmass. Luis Moretti’s Gran diccionario histórico circumscribes Florida to territories in Virginia, and Jean Le Clerq’s rendition corrupts its placenames and surrenders to mere “vanity” by labeling two Floridas: one “possessed” by the Spaniards while the other is “occupied” by the English, the French, and the Dutch (xxxiii). The editor heaps particular opprobrium on Juan Bautista Ramusio, Francis Bacon, and their followers for crediting Sebastian Cabot with the discovery, a contention that supported English claim to the region.
As Barcia points out, by the time Cabot reached the New World in 1497, those lands had already been reached by Christopher Columbus in 1492, bequeathed to Spain through the Papal Bull *Inter caetera* (1493), and partitioned between Spain and Portugal according to the terms of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). With this jurisdictional armature in place, Barcia dismisses outright the possibility of the feat ascribed to Cabot, reminding the reader that the explorer’s itinerary led him away from the region. He further ridicules the claim for even if Cabot had had the mandate, or the intention, to reach the region, his failed experiences in the Moluccas rendered the achievement unlikely, for “aunque era Gran Cosmografo, no era buen Marinero” (xxx).  

Furthermore, he finds the most authoritative anchor for his metageographic project in the depiction of the Indies that Antonio de Herrera undertakes in his *Descripción de las Yndias Occidentales*, a description of the Indies that precedes his *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos* (1601). In the editor’s notes to the 1726 edition, Barcia lauds the place of the *Descripción* in the Hispanic corpus, elevating that text to “the key” [la llave], no less, to Herrera’s famous chronicle (13). This written description is indispensable to Barcia given that it accompanied what could be considered the main public, official depiction and cartography of the possessions in the Indies: the maps contained in Herrera’s work (Padrón 15). The written and visual projections of the Indies were guided by a key notion at the center of the metageographical configuration of the overseas possessions: the exact calculation of the meridian and anti-meridian in the Treaty of Tordesillas. The modernity of the Treaty lies in the parameters used to determine the division of the Indies between Spain and Portugal, rather than in any practical power to resolve territorial disputes among European powers. The accord marked the first astronomical frontier that partitioned the globe into two spheres of influence by means of a line—a concrete meridian and its anti-meridian. In practice, imprecision in the conditions of measurement and the difficulty of ascertaining longitude early on hindered implementation of the Treaty in the long term, with the eventual annulment of the accord in 1750.  

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8 He finds a similar misgiving in Larrey’s work and awards him the trophy for anachronistic myth-making for mistakenly granting the discovery of Florida to Christopher Columbus.  

9 The principles of demarcation in Tordesillas were constantly challenged by European Monarchies beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. Charles V was first to face the contestation of claims to *imperium* after a legalistic interpretation of the Treaty. In his *Limits of the British Empire* (1578) John Dee interpreted the treaty as an accord that delineated spheres of influence (MacMillan 67-71). Spanish appeal to *dominium* (both territorial and spiritual) continued to fail as a justification of exclusive rights to lands in the New World. For a comprehensive study of legal rationales for Iberian expansion and the tension between canon law and secular
the division of territories, the accord was rather a peace agreement that enabled the monarchies to attempt ongoing negotiation of their respective claims (22-23).

The partial success of Tordesillas as a guide to delineating the extent of the Hispanic Monarchy's sovereignty persists in the visual projection of the region between the line of demarcation and the antimeridian in the maps in Herrera’s “Descripción de las Yndias Occidentales.” Without a mention of longitude, the projection compresses the oceans and creates a picture of the Hispanic world as a somewhat compact, manageable mass, with waters that can be crossed with relative ease (100 degrees separate the Equator from the Moluccas, he tells us, 24 less than indicated by other contemporary maps) (Padrón 16). The cartouche clearly and openly announces the map's political claim “Entre los dos Meridianos Señalados se contiene la navegación y descubrimiento que compete a los castellanos” [Fig. 1].

Figure 1. Juan López de Velasco, “Descripción de las Yndias Occidentales.” In: Antonio de Herrera, Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos (Madrid 1601). Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Despite the recalculations performed by the famed Academies in Paris and London later in the eighteenth century, Portuguese and Spanish geographers continued to rely on old maps and nautical charts to uphold territorial claims to their possessions, and simply to leave the dispute unresolved until the annulment of the Treaty in 1750. Among others, conflicts emerged in Sacramento on the River Plate and the Moluccas. See the works of Jerry Brotton and Charles E. Nowell, and the studies in El tratado de Tordesillas y su proyección.
Following Juan Lopez de Velasco’s *Geografía y Descripción Universal de las Indias* (1574), Herrera divides the Indies into “Indies of the North” and “Indies of the South,” together constitutive of a larger whole, and separated by what both authors pose as a natural partition: the Isthmus of Panama. This contentious division, in turn, posits a third area within the Occidental Indies: the “Indias del Poniente,” the Indies of the West (59). Ricardo Padrón points to the shift as a novel reorientation of the geographical imagination, transforming the Orient and Pacific islands into a Castilian West (15). This notion is first put forward in Velasco’s visual corpus. The text in his *Geografía* labels the region as “Islas del poniente” leaving the advancing of a Western Indies to the cartographic realm (Velasco 289). This visual projection reifies what is already being argued in the textual and diplomatic spheres. Sanctioned by Tordesillas’s terms, the delineation in Velasco’s map “Descripción” buttresses the graphic metageographical reconfiguration of Florida into a new continent and partakes of this celebration of imperial sovereignty over a vast, expansive Indies.

A creative use of Herrera’s written description of the region serves Barcia as the perfect authority to advance his case for a spacious Florida. Ensuing from the understanding of the Indies embodied in Tordesillas, Herrera’s *Descripción de las Yndias Orientales* follows Oviedo’s *Historia natural y general de las Indias* (1535) and Velasco’s *Geografía*, and expands the Northern Indies from the northern border of New Spain at the Panuco River to Terranova (80). In the *Ensayo*, Barcia reminds readers that the sixteenth-century chronicler “quiso distinguir entre Florida, propiamente tomada, ó conocida, ó con maior estension ignorada” (xxxii). However, he neglects to mention that Herrera confines Florida strictly to the peninsula “tomado en lo particular lo que es la Florida: es la punta que sale a la mar, Norte Sur, con la isla de Cuba” (ed. 1726, pg 80). Moreover, Velasco’s map in Herrera’s *Descripción* conceives the region as a province constitutive of the “Indias del Norte,” a configuration also confirmed by his regional map, “Descripción de las Yndias del Norte” [Fig. 2]. Instead, the eighteenth-century editor effects a synecdochal shift and expands Florida to include lands formerly under the Indies of the North, elevating a peninsular province to a continental mass. The meta-geographical rearrangement hides behind the authority in Herrera’s corpus, and builds on Velasco’s and Herrera’s delineations of an Indies of the North. This refashioning appropriates obliquely the expansive extension of the Hispanic realm that the cosmographer and the chronicler projected after the spirit of Tordesillas in the sixteenth century. Surprisingly, despite considering *Descripción* and the maps accompanying the text as fundamental elements for understanding the history of the region, in his *Ensayo* Barcia does not invoke the cartographic material: this tells us something important about how he chooses to contest the foreign authors’ errors— I will return to this cartographic silence later on.
The greatest menace the writings of foreign authors posed to Florida’s renewed meta-geographical identity were what Barcia considered egregious, careless errors that bled into the realm of cartography, imbuing it with “mistakes” (xxv, xxxiv, li, lii). Specifically, Barcia decries the translation of words into the visual, and the obliteration of historical truth by the mimetic power of images that “con nuevas voces, en su Nacion, hace plausibles sus invenciones” (xxiv). Such fundamental mistakes, he fears, ultimately sanction the erasure of memory. Nicolas de Fer’s “La France occidentale dans l’Amérique Septentionale” was particularly threatening. It is in this map that Barcia considers these shifts or “traslados” to be most dangerous since the mapmaker served the King of Spain himself. Despite the fact that he oversaw the entire cartographic repertoire at the service of Bourbon propaganda, “llama Lusiana á todo el Pais, y a la Punta ó Cabo, á que se estrechan algunos…llama Peninsula de la Lusiana, demarcandola como Provincia Francesa” (xxxiii). De Fer had, in fact, been the official geographer of the French Dauphin since 1690, entering the service of the Spanish King (former French Duke of Anjou) in 1702. During those years, he enjoyed the support of both monarchies, publishing atlases on the beauties of France and the wars and countries involved in the crisis of the Spanish succession, and winning renown for his wall maps. Barcia fears that the institutional power bestowed on de Fer by his position invests the
cartographic translation encoded in his projection of Florida with even greater ontological influence.

“La France occidentale dans l’Amérique Septentriónale” depicts North America, highlighting the French Canadian territories, the lakes, and the Labrador Peninsula to the north; the territories of New Mexico to the west; the North Sea (Atlantic Ocean) to the east; and the Gulf of Mexico and the north-eastern part of New Spain to the south [Fig. 3].

De Fer adopts the scales in the projection of Guillaume Delisle’s “L’Amérique Septentriónale” (1700), a rendering of the continent that no longer relies solely on the eyewitness report of the Gentleman of Elvas (1557) and the description of Hernando de Soto’s itinerary in the Inca Garcilaso’s *La Florida del Inca*, both texts that served mapmakers as the main source of information for two hundred years.¹⁰ In a renewed assemblage of knowledge, Delisle innovates by engaging the techniques of scientific mapping developed by French cartographer César-François Cassini de Thury and members of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris for their

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¹⁰ The Inca’s description of Florida was summarized by Antonio de Herrera. The Dutch geographer Joannes de Laet adopted it in his *History of the New World*. 
survey of France, and presses them into service for the recalculation of longitudes in the region. By means of these new methods, Delisle reassesses distances and proportions in the early reports of Elvas and Garcilaso, and transforms the spatial projection of these territories (Galloway 81). Recent reports by French travelers, missionaries, and native accounts, and the seventeenth-century maps by Nicolas Sanson, Vincenzo Coronelli, and others contribute to this cartographic refashioning. All this information is echoed in de Fer’s map, yet it silences any type of Spanish contributions. The ornate cartouche on the left side of de Fer’s “La France occidentale” confirms the new sources and eliminates any mention of the Gentleman of Elvas and the Inca Garcilaso, or later summaries of such reports in Herrera’s Historia. Behind a façade of mere technical specification, the legend confirms that the reinterpretation of the landscape is based on the cartographic projection of Delisle and French reports by missionaries like father Louis Hennepin, and the accounts of the Sieur de la Salle, Louis Joliet, and the Baron of Lahontan (three early French mappers of the Mississipi), among others.

The new calculations of longitude and latitude furthered in earlier French cartography worried Barcia, for, in transcending what he considered empty gestures, they potentially undermined Spanish possession. Simple toponymic re-labelings of the landscape like Fr. Christian LeClerq’s division of the territory between Spanish possession and French, English, and Dutch occupation are to Barcia simple “vanidad” despite the highly charged political statement encoded in such gestures (xxxiii). However, de Fer’s adoption of Delisle’s projections entailed a compression of the territories described by the old Spanish sources. Patricia Galloway notes that his delineation of the Florida region is shrunk in Delisle’s sketches for his 1718 map “Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi”—a work that follows the projection of its 1700 predecessor. The transfer from the Spanish short league in de Soto’s time (2.6 miles) to the eighteenth-century French legal league (lieue, 2.4 miles) for instance, reduced the distance between Anhaica/Ochese to Cutifachiqui from 1,041 miles based on the Gentleman of Elva’s report to 600 miles. Recalculations like these also mislocated de Soto’s landing on the north coast of the Gulf rather than on the west coast of the peninsula (Galloway 78). As Barcia decries, de Fer’s projection also creates a chasm between the word and image by continuing to use Spanish place names on the rechristened Floridian region (Barcia 11). He repeats this concern in his condemnation of the maps used in the Antwerp edition of Herrera’s work (1728). The replacement of the original 14 charts in Descripción by two unnamed French maps at the end of the volume give rise to an unforgivable discordance between the written and the visual description of the Indies, hindering the appropriate apprehension of the region by readers. Nevertheless, de Fer’s representation joins cartographic projects that compress Florida and undercut the universal expanse that Barcia attempts. De Fer’s “La France occidentale” attacks the
reification of an expansive Indies of the North, a meta-geographical construct that Barcia appropriates for Florida. This construct owed its authority to the principle of sovereign \textit{imperium} concurrent with the demarcation of the Indies. The map implicitly challenged the parameters that underlay the meta-geographical model advanced by Velasco and Herrera, following the astronomical guidelines of Tordesillas, and, ultimately, infringed on the Monarchy’s principle of \textit{imperium} in the Americas.

The second borrowing de Fer makes from the cartography of his French predecessors relates more urgently to the egregious errors that Barcia condemns in his \textit{Ensayo}. In an exercise of sovereign obliteration, de Fer erases all mention of Florida, marking the peninsula as “Near the Island of Louisiana” [Presq’ Isle de la Louisiane]—a positional and relational, rather than a nominal, label [Fig. 4].

![Figure 4. Nicolás De Fer. “La France occidentale dans l’Amérique Septentrionale” (1718). Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.](image)

Patricia Galloway identifies similar nomenclature in Delisle’s early drafts for his “Map of New France and Neighboring Countries” (1696), which shows
the peninsula also marked as “near the Island of Florida” (83-84).11 This projection contains a recalculated version of de Soto’s route and Garcilaso’s description, and embraces some of the toponyms that the latter provides in his *Florida del Inca*. A later version of the map intensifies the political charges in LeClerq’s mildly contentious division of the region between “occupation” and “possession”. Beyond erasing English incursions in the Carolinas, he delineates the southern region of North America as territories destroyed and disturbed by Spanish “intrusion”, marking a contrast with territories the French inhabited merely by “occupation” (Galloway 85). The topographic designation of the region is suggestive of the political desires behind this territorial reconfiguration. In a move that antedates (and perhaps inspired) Barcia’s metageographical synecdoque, de Fer echoes Delisle’s delineation of the continent, but transforms Florida into a new positional referent constitutive of a different, larger whole—Louisiana. Through this shift, de Fer expunges the toponym of Florida from the landscape, an operation with ontological implications. Spanish inhabitation is rendered as negligible, relegated to miniscule visual references at Pensacola, St. Marie d’Apalache (near present-day Tallahassee), and in Santa María de Galves Bay. An isolated signpost for the fort of St. Augustine minimizes its role as stronghold against French and English advance, and as the defensive bulwark for the surrounding missions and indigenous villages under its protection.

Furthermore, de Fer’s representation exploits the geometrical structure of cartographic projection to deploy a fantasy of total possession. Denis Cosgrove reminds us that visual design is a key element that achieves a transformational effect on how viewers perceive space, magnifying the political claim even in the absence of willful misrepresentation. The French cartographer counterposes the lacunae in the Peninsula with a hyperbolic representation of the mainland’s natural wealth and an idyllic depiction of human relations. An inset detailing the coast of the Gulf of Mexico commands the upper left side of the map, highlighting the mouth of the Mississippi and its connection to the waters of the Caribbean [Fig. 3]. In a gesture of sovereign claim, the coat of arms of the Compagnie d’Occident (also known as the Mississippi Company) and that of the province of Louisiana oversee the region detailed in the inset, spilling their dominion both onto the region detailed in the enclosure, and symbolically, over the representation of the entire continent. In the Caribbean, centered by an ornate compass rose placed in the very middle of the sea, the rhumb lines marking the sailing routes connect commercial points in the coastal region (the recently discovered mouth of the Mississippi, Pensacola, the Bay of

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11 Delisle repeats this nomenclature in his “Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississippi” as well (1718). This map and “L’Amérique Septentrionale” (1700) are available through David Rumsey’s online map collection.
Ascension) to further and promising markets in New Spain and the Bahamas [Fig. 3]. Under the pretext of providing further detail on the seascape, the cartographer shows trans-Atlantic galleons plying the gulf in a dance with the canoes of French traders, portraying the waters as open bodies with free commercial circulation. Eliding the virulent guarding of the Gulf by the Spanish navy invites us to imagine the possibilities raised by connections between the North American hinterland and potential markets in the Spanish Indies. At the lower right of the map, alongside the Caribbean and to the east of Florida and the Carolinas, de Fer finds an unexpected corner in which to place a cartouche containing a detail of the cityscape of Quebec, the commercial powerhouse in the French territories to the north. In a visual chiasmus, the projection establishes a parallel between the waters of the Saint Lawrence River and those of the Gulf of Mexico, reinforcing the connection by including a similar compass rose and patterning of ships in both bodies of water—in both cases, one in each quadrant. The chorographic depiction of Quebec completes this chiasmic parallelism that shifts the gaze from a non-figurative to an oblique view (a bird’s eye) endeavoring to convey empirical knowledge—almost like the traveler’s memory of a city view. This visual fantasy invites viewers to picture on the Louisiana mainland a potential mercantile success equivalent to the actual success of Quebec.

The cartouche above the cityscape buttresses the visualization of Occidental France as a continental extension through the Saint Lawrence River’s ostensible influence over North America. The discrete collection of locations and peoples listed guides the eye on a counterclockwise path connecting Canada, Acadia, the Eskimo, the Hurons, the Iroquois, and the Illinois, and on to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, New England, and finally the Island of Terranova. Through the circular visual movement elicited by the particular sequencing of geographical names it contains, an array of discrete and widely separated places is somehow organized into a totality; a fiction of territorial wholeness is projected onto the landscape. The gesture, of course, turns a blind eye on what was, at best, a tenuous control of the Canadian region and its collapse during the War of Spanish Succession in the previous decade (Miquelon 659). Barcia is well aware of the ontological power of this operation. Reciting the litany of placenames in de Fer’s cartouche verbatim, Barcia argues that viewers unaware of this renaming and textual reconfiguration of the landscape not only would fail to find La Florida but would imagine it disappeared into the sea: “imaginará se ha sumergido, y que son Fabulas de las Historias de ella” (xxxiii). Years later, the editor denounced a similar misrepresentation of the iconography of the Indies in the woodcuts accompanying the Antwerp edition of Herrera’s Historia. Ostensibly having a mere ornamental function, the decorative borders “offend history and truth” by reconstituting the past through the forcing of the visual alignment of figures with military deeds accomplished by Castilians. Garlands connect Amerigo Vespucci with
Pettinaroli, "Critical Metagrographies in Barcia"

Santiago, patron saint of Spain; or link Moctezuma, Atahualpa, and de Soto in an unseemly allegorical triad. The uncanny combinations and inconsistencies create historical fallacies that ultimately “violentan la vista” (xl).

In juxtaposition to the presumed vacuum in the Peninsula, de Fer further invokes chorography to delineate an edifying picture of savage life on the mainland, integrated into a model of what might be characterized as mercantile humanity. The mountain ranges depicted in relief evoke the strange visual sensation of a space already traversed, explored, measured, and apprehended. A panoply of rivers generously bathe the topography, auguring bountiful crops and marking the potential of fluvial circulation to get goods out to desirous buyers. The cartographer reduces the distance between the lake region in the north and the Gulf coast in the South and conceals obstacles in the topography, distorting the terrain into an easily traversable commercial paradise. A plotting of Indian settlements, towns, villages, forts, and trails alongside native hunters guide the viewer’s gaze, transforming the region into a fantasy of commercial utopia—a realm of appropriation from Nature and subsequent exchange.

The new vision of Occidental France that de Fer crafts in North America illustrates the contributions of cartography to the envisioning of a cohesive French empire after the Utrecht negotiations. Remappings like de Fer’s transformed the increasingly inland patches of territories into a coherent, obstinately mercantile, and maritime empire desired by the French Monarchy. The exercise lent a seemingly rational and realistic character to the abstract political entity that the Crown aimed to construct a world away across the Atlantic. Ideologues and members of the cabinet like Jérôme de Phélypaux, Count of Pontchartrain and secretary of state for the Navy under Louis XIV, had failed to advance his project to negotiate an exchange of lands that was to craft “un espèce de continent” out of each of the separate lands and islands that Europeans held in North American territory (cted. in Miquelon 658). Yet, failures like these in the diplomatic arena did not, for instance, deter the cartographical depiction of the commercial empire to which the French aspired. Geographic data lent added authority to political claims as a category of knowledge that served the purpose of transforming landscapes into spaces ostensibly both controlled and possessed. As Benton argues, “imperial mapping functioned as a panopticon writ large” at the service of advancing authority through observation (11). Barcia mocks earlier efforts to claim the Occidental Indies by its renaming as “Francia Antartica, por pretender, repugnando al conocimiento, y experiencia de los Hombres, aver tenido parte en sus primeros Descubrimientos” and to recalculate distances through the new knowledge brought by triangulation surveys sponsored by the Academy of Paris [sic] (li). De Fer’s erasures and re-inscriptions exemplify such projects that convey territorial dominion over the region, challenging the principle of imperium after which the Spanish claimed the territory—property and
possession, rather than the notion of supreme rule and jurisdiction advanced by the astronomical parameters of Tordesillas.

The cartographic void effected by de Fer causes Barcia no end of anguish: the French mapmaker “deja [las poblaciones de los españoles] como Habitaciones de Estrangeros, haciendo facilmente, con la Pluma Uno, lo que no han logrado, con las Armas Tantos” (xxxiii). Indeed, the chart fires the imagination by using visual references to organize apprehension, problematizing the region’s geopolitics. Not only does he blatantly disregard the parameters of Tordesillas; following Delisle, de Fer elides the more recent 17th-century renegotiations, in particular, the Treaty of 1670 between Spain and England, which Barcia cites as “Tratado de Pazes” (xxviii). This accord is the earliest reassertion of sovereignty in the region to follow the principle of “plenary Right of Sovereignty, Dominion, Possession and Propriety” [sic] rather than the notion of demarcation that guided Tordesillas (5). Barcia warns his readers of the threat that the erasure poses as a proxy for knowledge. To him, maps are dangerous for they function as a formal mechanism of enunciation whose mimetic qualities are placed at the service of the objectification and construction of reality. They anchor political statements in visible artifacts, reifying postulations into object of knowledge, and eventually affecting collective memory. The scientific and political arguments behind these projections undermined then-current as well as past notions of territorial control in the region, notions essential to the imperial rhetoric of the Spanish Monarchy.

Barcia makes use of an analogy between de Fer’s project and earlier European maps that undermined the influence of Tordesillas in the delineation of the Indies, in order to confirm the threat that these objects pose to the advancement of a cohesive imperial realm. Pointing to Geronimo de Chaves’s map of Florida in Abraham Ortelius Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (1587) [Fig. 5], the editor makes a sarcastic counterproposal; at least, he jokes, “es mas tolerable estrecharla, que desvanecerla” (xxxiv). The choice of mapmakers for this cartographic witticism is telling, for the projections of the Indies in Ortelius’s Atlas do not include the lines of demarcation and the anti-meridian, the astronomical parameters that transform the region into a Castilian realm. Moreover, Barcia points to the stupidity of de Fer’s exercise, for on closer inspection even the clumsiest of readers can readily recognize the ample use the cartographer makes of

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12 In 1742, Antonio de Arredondo followed the terms of the 1670 Treaty to map the historical rights and title of the Spanish Monarchy to the province of Guale which was occupied by the English under the name of Georgia. The map is available at the Library of Congress.

13 Padrón marks these absences in his observations of similar gestures in Ortelius’s “Maris pacifici” map (22).
Spanish toponyms: his attempt at erasure is exceedingly incomplete, whether out of haste, carelessness, or some other cause. However incomplete, though, the ontological deletion affects the perception of history and the claim to the provinces that “siendo agenas, como la tierra de la Florida, tendría el nombre la duracion de la violencia, o de la vida del Imponedor” [sic] (xxxiv). Acknowledging the power of visual mimesis, Barcia nevertheless reclaims the symbolic ownership and political mastery embedded in place names.

A remarkable gap in the body of evidence mounted to challenge de Fer’s project are the maps in Antonio de Herrera’s Descripción de las Indias, a corpus that, as Padrón argues, can be considered as the official cartography of jurisdiction over the Indies. The gap is striking because, as mentioned earlier, the editor labels the maps as “the key” [la llave], together with the description of the regions to Herrera’s work. The text is being edited at the time the Ensayo is published—Barcia mentions this in the notes to the readers in the second edition of Herrera (13). Thus we know that the editor is certainly acquainted with the corpus. The maps in the 1726 re-edition of the Historia testify to the scale of the metageographical shift advanced.

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\[As the critic points out, Barcia’s re-editions prove the endurance of this corpus into the eighteenth century (15).\]
earlier in the *Ensayo*, and the challenges entailed in projecting an expansive continental Florida (Herrera 1726) [Fig. 6].

The old cartouche in the map “Descripccion de las Yndias Occidentales” is now bordered with ornamental whorls, lending further emphasis to the original political statement. A new zonal diagram on the left, marking the five zones of inhabitation on the globe, reaffirms the continental configuration of the world and places the Castilian Indies in context for the eighteenth-century reader in relation to the great early-modern cosmographic feats. It connects the claims of the Monarchy with Columbus’s venture, and his confirmation of an open geography that conceived of further territories and the possibility of human habitation of the Torrid Zone. This spatial innovation led to a complex, gradual process by which the former torrid, arid, and unpopulated Antipodes were

15 While cartographers did away with mimetic icons and figures drawn from spatial projections during the eighteenth century, they continued to use allegorical cartouches as “historical narrative” (John Green, ctd. in Clark).
reconceptualized as the hot-temperate, lush, inhabited Tropics of early-modern times. The reference to Book 1 of Herrera’s Historia right above the diagram crowns the visual statement by directing readers to the chronicler’s reminder that the lands of the Indies “tuvo D. Christoval Colón por muy constante opinion, antes que començase el Descubrimiento, que eran habitables” [sic] (210). Barcia’s zonal diagram offers a reminder of that cosmographic breakthrough, and furnishes critical legitimation for possession of the continent. Nevertheless, in the re-edition of the regional map corresponding to the Indies of the North, visual inscription of a new configuration of Florida is reduced to a rather perfunctory gesture: the “dilatado continente” of the Ensayo is here extended northward as far as the mid-Atlantic through a parade of added toponyms on the eastern coast roughly to the Carolinas [Fig. 7]. Possession is inscribed by mere lexical repetition.

Fig. 7. Juan López de Velasco, “Descripción de las Yndias del Norte.” In: Antonio de Herrera, Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos (Madrid 1726). Courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

16 For a comprehensive study of this process, see Nicolás Wey Gómez’s The Tropics of Empire.
In lieu of a comprehensive visual representation to convey imperial expansion in the Floridian peninsula, Barcia undertakes an incomplete inscription of the new meta-geography he proposes through a catalog of texts that stands as proof of Spanish possession. His hermeneutics of space and place again mobilize the excursus to further “la dilatadisima Region de la Florida” through a bibliographic project (xlii). Close knowledge of the region, he argues, cannot emerge from generalities but rather from a set of particularities such as he presents in his extensive list. Matthew Edney reminds us that Enlightenment’s “universal geographical archive” was a figurative one—a grand intellectual framework within which geographical knowledge could be sought, obtained, and negotiated. However, the multitude of “microarchives” throughout the eighteenth century kept alive the dream of an actual physical archive through an intertextual complex of representational strategies (170-171). Through the index of “particularities” the editor attempts to reconstruct—in an abbreviated and elliptical way—the heterogeneous realities of Spanish dominion in the peninsula. The classics of New World historiography parade in an orderly (yet not fully chronological) sequence along with a few histories of Florida and memorials, travel relations, and travel diaries related to the region—numbering over 75 works. Histories like those of Antonio de Herrera, Pietro Martir d’Anghiera, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, and Francisco López de Gómara, among others, defend the expansive configuration of the Indies, confronting the errors that Barcia finds in the work of Europeans writers like Cornelius Wytfliet, Joannes de Laet, and Richard Hakluyt. Chorographies or particular descriptions of Florida do not abound in the list despite being the ideal corpus to convey particularities of territorial possession. In fact, Barcia does not include the earliest, Pedro Menéndez’s Descripción y calidades de la Florida, an omission mocked by his harshest critic, Luis de Salazar y Castro, who takes the editor to task for wasting space by mentioning an absence, while filling the rest of the pages with a myriad of other “mamotretos” (8). Pedro Fernández del Pulgar’s Historia general de la Florida (c. 1600s) exemplifies the genre. The text compiles both the earliest reports on the region (Cabeza de Vaca, de Soto, and Herrera) and the latest, Descripción de la Bahía de Santa María de Galve.

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17 “El individual conocimiento de estas regiones, sus particulares costumbres, sucesos y menos sus poseedores no puede resultar de ninguna reflexión general; por lo cual donde ha parecido estar mejor, se han entendido algunas particularidades que, especificarlas todas, era salir de los límites en que debe incluirse nuestro intento. Y así para que se comprenda universalmente algún indicio de lo mucho que habla que decir se referirán ordenada y brevemente noticias que inciten a apurar lo que aprehendiese el deseo, las cuales hallara el curioso con mayor extensión en los autores que fuera de los informes, cartas, y otros papeles procurados a este fin” [sic] (xliii).
Pettinaroli, "Critical Metagrographies in Barcia"

(1693), by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. The latter—also the second example of chorography cited in the list—describes the region and identifies it as strategic territory that the Monarchy ought to settle before French missions, after the spirit of de La Salle’s search for a connection between Canada and the Caribbean, seize the bay. However, Sigüenza y Góngora’s assessment and the subsequent recommendations did not translate immediately into a policy, but rather, when the French threatened the region later in the century.\(^{18}\) Reports of fortifications in the Bay of Galvez and “memoriales” of later expeditions directed to the Council of Indies were strung like beads along intermittent paragraphs attempting to rationalize a coherent continental, cohesive geography.

Histories of New Spain and Mexico complete Barcia’s paradoxical endeavor of cartographic reconstruction of a continental entity on the basis of fragments of descriptions offered by texts in his bibliography. Yet histories like Juan de Villagutierre’s *Historia de Nuevo México* (1701), Agustín de Betancourt’s *Teatro Mexicano* (1697), and Antonio de Remesal’s *Historia de la Provincia de San Vicente de Chiapa y Guatemala* (1619) address Florida as a constitutive part of the larger territory announced in the corresponding titles rather than as its opposite. In other cases, texts serve to inscribe possession by mere re-titling of their second editions. Agustín Davila Padilla’s *Historia de la Provincia de México* (1596) gets re-branded as *Varia Historia de la Nueva-España y la Florida* (1634), yet both present a saga of failed possession in the account of difficulties in penetrating and conquering the region by military and evangelical means. In similar manner, Francisco Cervantes de Salazar’s *Crónica de las Indias* (re-titled *Crónica de la Nueva España*) serves to frame an analysis of the challenges to control and administration of the region given the difficulty of Spanish-Native relations.\(^{19}\) In the bibliography, order replaces conjecture, and interpretation hinges on the metaphorical capacity of texts to serve as proxies for universality. The corpus that Barcia crafts attempts to inscribe a mimesis of *dominium* to counteract de Fer’s sweeping erasure, and to bolster Spanish rights to possess territory through particularities that contribute to apprehending Florida’s “universality.” Nevertheless, the canon amounts to a failed universe unto itself, mediated as an ersatz depiction of territorial absolutism on the actual Floridian Peninsula.

\(^{18}\) Territorial dominium continued to remain an incomplete project in the following decades. For further readings, see Clifton Paisley’s work and for the larger old Georgia region, see Herbert E. Bolton’s and Trevor R. Reese’s studies.

\(^{19}\) In an oblique manner, Barcia may be appealing to earlier editorial projects that effect their own meta-geographical shifts from particular locations towards the regionalization of New Spain, through re-labeling of histories and descriptions in the seventeenth century.
The hermeneutical mandate that Barcia issues to his readers privileges space, rather than the chronology invoked in his title, to sort out the strains of fashioning imperial fragmentation in the Floridian peninsula into a coherent whole. The editor essays a new metageography that nevertheless cannot withstand the weight of its own eroding spatial armature. His transformation of Florida into a continent follows a selective invocation of the Treaty that excludes its visual representation—precisely its most successful aspect. Barcia’s attempt marks the beginning of the end for the cosmographical edifice of Tordesillas. It also suggests the role of practical adaptations of theoretically creative notions to preserve legal authority, asserting both dominium and imperium over geographic formations like the Indies—even if imperfectly so. The almost encyclopedic act of accretion embodied in his bibliography attempts to pierce the surface rhetoric of de Fer’s map, and the numerous ideological statements that belie the apparent objectivity of pseudo-scientific cartography. The proposed list suggests that the assertion of imperial territorialities through literary, historiographical, and cartographic projects was dependent on shifting categories (textual and visual) rather than on fixed borders. Nevertheless, Barcia’s silencing of Herrera’s cartographic corpus in the context of the Ensayo and his proposed bibliographic “microarchive” can be seen, then, as a desperate gesture born in an awareness of—and perhaps, in spite of itself, even announcing—a crisis of representation of possession it befell the Bourbon Monarchy to navigate. His failure to incorporate Herrera’s maps betrays a geographic imagination unable or unwilling to break the fetters of temporality and conceive instead of a new, spatial framework for legitimizing empire.20

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