

## *Marijuana Boom*



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THE RISE AND FALL OF COLOMBIA'S  
FIRST DRUG PARADISE

*Lina Britto*



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*Para mi abuela Nina*



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MAP 1. Colombia today. Map by Bill Nelson.



# *Introduction*

## A FORGOTTEN HISTORY

FROM JUAN VALDEZ TO PABLO ESCOBAR, for the past half century at least, a *mestizo* man with a thick mustache has represented Colombia on the world stage. Valdez was a fictional character who during the 1960s and early 1970s promoted Colombian coffee to the international market. Escobar was a cocaine kingpin who in the 1980s and early 1990s led a war against his extradition to the United States. The inspiration for the Valdez character was the typical male farmer of the Andean interior. He wore a straw hat, a poncho, and *alpargatas* (rope-soled sandals), carried a machete, and was always accompanied by Conchita, a mule loaded with jute sacks of the precious bean. Escobar, in contrast, established his own visual referent. His curly hair, protruding belly, colorful shirts, dispassionate expression, and fleet of aircraft filled with tons of the profitable alkaloid have inspired so many telenovelas and movies that at this point he is as fictional as Valdez. And between the two icons extends the history of a country that in two decades transitioned from a coffee republic to a narcotics nation.

But before the bucolic Valdez yielded to the warmongering Escobar, marijuana traffickers partnered with US buyers in the early 1970s to flood North American cities and suburbs with the drug, thereby capitalizing on growing countercultural demand, and at the end of the decade these traffickers resisted the frontal attack of the state. Popularly known as *marimberos*, these pioneers of the drug trade came from the Guajira peninsula and the neighboring Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, two areas in the northernmost section of the country's Caribbean coast that were considered as barely belonging to the nation-state. Although *marimberos* made Colombia the main supplier of US drug markets, and later became the first targets of the US-led "war on drugs" in South America, the boom they brought to life is a forgotten chapter

of the innocent era before the cocaine industry car-bombed the country. After them other peoples in poor and isolated territories became involved in the cultivation, commercialization, and exportation of drugs, making Colombia one of the principal producers in the world and a problem for hemispheric security.

How did a peripheral region become the birthplace of the illicit drug trade that turned Colombia's coffee republic into a narcotics nation? And why did this first boom in illicit drugs not only decline but also fall into oblivion? These unanswered questions form this book's points of departure. For the past three decades, scholars, journalists, and artists have focused on untangling the ins and outs of the hydra of cocaine processing, trafficking, diplomacy, and war. Academic literature on the popularly known *bonanza marimbera*, however, is scant. Most existing works were produced at the time of the boom, when social scientists, politicians, and diplomats sought to explain a novelty for which there were no precedents and they had no framework. Between academic debates and ideological controversies, experts and stakeholders forged a consensus according to which this boom was a regional anecdote of the absence of the state in a frontier society and the result of the moral degeneration that US consumers and smugglers brought with them in their search for new sources of marijuana. Its decline, on the other hand, was interpreted as the logical outcome of boom-and-bust dynamics and of the takeover of the country by the cocaine cartels.<sup>1</sup>

In this book, I take a different approach and instead argue that the marijuana boom was as dramatic a turning point in the history of Colombia as the one that took place with coffee. Moreover, I find that the marijuana boom was also a critical component of hemispheric relations to the extent that it served as a training ground for the "war on drugs" in South America. Without denying the weakness of central governments in the marijuana region, or the crucial role US buyers played in stimulating this illicit export economy, I contend that the causes of the boom cannot be found in "the myth of the absence of the state," much less in external factors.<sup>2</sup> Instead, I examine and analyze the process of integration of the broader region that includes the Guajira peninsula and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta into national and international political, commercial, and cultural networks centered in the Andean interior and oriented toward the United States. I assert that the marijuana boom was the product of unintended consequences stemming from a series of state interventions that the Colombian government carried out in pursuit of agrarian development and nation-state formation.

From the early twentieth century into the late 1960s, these state-led reforms were implemented with support from US federal governments and private investors. The contradictory ways in which local, regional, national, and international interest groups coalesced in response to these state interventions created a new arena of contestation and accommodation that materialized in the marijuana boom of the 1970s.

Without disregarding boom-and-bust dynamics and the rapid expansion of the cocaine business as factors for the subsequent collapse in the marijuana export economy, I call attention to more important causes. In particular, the political and diplomatic struggles to define the state response to the growing drug traffic between Colombia and the United States better explain the decline. The criminalization of producers and traffickers and the militarization of the region between 1978 and 1980—a concerted initiative on the part of the Colombian and US governments—were deliberate strategies to sort out deep domestic crises unfolding in both countries in a context of increasing militarism as the Cold War escalated at the end of the 1970s. The marijuana region served as a laboratory for the US and Colombian governments to experiment with a novel approach to statecraft and international cooperation, an approach that assumed drug production and traffic to be security threats that warranted bilateral military interventions in peripheral areas where national sovereignty and US hemispheric hegemony were challenged. On the ground, the campaign of crop eradication and traffic interdiction prompted marijuana traffickers to develop mechanisms of survival that led to ferocious competition among them, so that their business practices morphed from reciprocity and solidarity to indiscriminate violence in the form of killings, robberies, and betrayals, making marijuana cultivation, commercialization, and exportation an expensive and less viable practice.

This book's publication happens to coincide with a sweeping change to marijuana policy throughout the world, from decriminalization to legalization. In Colombia, medical marijuana is legal (albeit not yet completely regulated), but recreational consumption is still prohibited and is a contentious matter. After years of toleration following the 1994 Constitutional Court order allowing individuals to possess a personal dosage, a presidential decree came into force on October 1, 2018, that prompted the National Police to conduct raids against recreational users. Months later, the Constitutional Court reversed the decision. In the meantime, excessive police activity and even brutality have not prevented activists and enthusiasts from regularly protesting through social media and direct action, including calling for

*fumatones*—marathons of public marijuana smoking in designated parks. In the United States, at this writing twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have fully legalized marijuana. News about increasing tax revenues, growing incomes for small entrepreneurs and farmers, and even employment for veterans of the “war on terror” conflict with reports on the difficulties and challenges that producers, merchants, and consumers face in dealing with the gap between state and federal laws. But long before marijuana came in from the cold, an agrarian country in South America traveling a rugged road to industrialization and urbanization supplied the largest market in the world with tons of weed at a moment when youth challenged the US government’s forms of domination and hegemonic projects at home and abroad one joint at a time.

Using a multiscale perspective on local, regional, national, and international developments; a commodity studies approach; and methods of political, cultural, and diplomatic history, this book addresses Colombia’s forgotten history of its marijuana boom in the hope of decoding one of the greatest conundrums of our times: how and why illicit drug economies and cultures emerged in the Americas in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and how massive drug trafficking, and the violent structures that sustain it, was born.<sup>3</sup>

## REGION AND NATION

In the national imaginary, the Guajira and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta occupy a singular place. Precariously connected to the rest of the littoral and the Andean interior through overland trails, the peninsula and the mountain range became objects of inquiry, exploration, and inspiration for thinkers, entrepreneurs, and artists in search of spaces and peoples not yet fully integrated with the modern nation-state. It is not a coincidence that the first Colombian modernist novel, *Four Years Abroad Myself*, and the most famous work on the “magical realism” of Latin American modernity, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, take place in the Guajira and the Sierra Nevada.

While much has been written about the landmark novel of Colombia’s Nobel Prize winner, little has been said about the work of one of his mentors. Before there was Gabriel García Márquez, Colombia had Eduardo Zalamea Borda. It was Zalamea Borda who overcame Colombian literature’s “sad provincial condition” to find the “authentically universal.”<sup>4</sup> In *Cuatro años a bordo de mí mismo: Diario de los cinco sentidos* (Four Years Abroad

Myself: Diary of the Five Senses), Zalamea Borda tells the story of a young aspiring writer who, finding Bogotá “narrow, cold, disastrously built, with pretensions of a big city,” travels to its antipode, the Guajira, where rumor has it that anyone can make “marvelous business” and get rich.<sup>5</sup> In search of women to love and pearls to buy, he finds a cosmopolitan world of contraband, sexual pleasure, and violence that transforms him forever. Published in 1934, almost a decade after Zalamea Borda left the Guajira, the book came out at the same time that Liberal president Alfonso López Pumarejo came to power with an ambitious modernization plan. In tune with its times, the novel was “a romantic wandering” that criticized development, and it became an instant classic and a best seller.<sup>6</sup> Two decades later, the first generation of nationally trained anthropologists began to study the peoples of the Guajira through a lens similar to what Zalamea Borda had used—that is, as an archaic human group confronting modernity.<sup>7</sup>

By then, Zalamea Borda was a successful diplomat, and he returned to the Guajira to advocate for its modernization. Under his leadership, a governmental commission attended an international meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in Paris in May 1960 to promote the Guajira as the setting of the pilot project in Latin America for Unesco’s Desertification and Arid Zones program. Zalamea Borda and his team presented the Guajira as “a zone that should be treated as of high national interest” and requested the “scientific, technical, and financial assistance” of Unesco to pursue “the organization of a live economic and cultural frontier of DEEP PATRIOTIC SENSE” (capitals in the original). During the next few months, Bogotá, with the help of Washington, Unesco, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Fulbright Commission, created the institutes that administered the program that would make the Guajira an “active coast in terms of the exploitation of maritime resources, tourism, international trade, and a future great export industry.”<sup>8</sup> But no bureaucracy could compete with neighboring Venezuela’s oil economy, and these international efforts to create a productive sector in the peninsula proved insufficient. For the rest of the 1960s the Guajira’s indigenous people continued living in precariousness, depending on rich Venezuela for survival.<sup>9</sup>

Much like the Guajira, the Sierra Nevada exists as a liminal place in Colombia’s imagination. Since the mid-nineteenth century, its unique ecosystems have enchanted visionaries who wished to colonize areas with abundant natural resources. In 1855, a young French anarchist named Élisée Reclus published the first modern account of the mountain range, a book that recounts

the adventurous two years Reclus spent working on a tropical agriculture project he described as a “great whirlwind of work and commerce” involving a “brave people who live without preoccupation for the future.”<sup>10</sup> Although Reclus’s project failed and he returned to Europe empty-handed—to become the father of comparative geography—others followed his example and wrote about the socioeconomic potential of the Sierra Nevada.<sup>11</sup> Through governmental reports, chorographic commissions, and travelers’ accounts, men of letters and science invented a “savage frontier” to which the state had to bring progress by supporting investors in agricultural enterprises.<sup>12</sup> This “otherness” had made the Sierra Nevada the cradle of modern anthropology and archaeology in Colombia by 1941, when another Frenchman, renowned ethnologist Paul Rivet, who lived in exile in Bogotá under the official auspices of the Liberal government, sent his Austrian mentee Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff and the latter’s Colombian wife, Alicia Dussán, to found there a local branch of the National Institute of Ethnology (IEN).<sup>13</sup> During the next five years, the couple studied the four indigenous groups that lived in the Sierra Nevada’s three watersheds, and concluded that they were on the verge of cultural extinction.<sup>14</sup> The ethnologists’ *indigenismo* aimed to foster a more inclusive national culture by counteracting the beliefs of racial superiority that prevailed in Colombia’s coffee republic.<sup>15</sup> However, their works represented the Sierra Nevada as a world that stood in opposition to the modern nation-state though it was swept by external forces out of its peoples’ control.<sup>16</sup>

This nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century academic and artistic literature set the foundation for the official discourse that cast the Guajira and the Sierra Nevada as one of the nation’s primitive alterities, its shadow, its other. It is no surprise that Macondo, the fictional town of García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and paragon of premodern isolation and endogamy, was located somewhere in the Sierra Nevada after the Buendía family migrated from the Guajira. But contrary to these discourses, the peninsula and the mountain range have been historically integrated into, and dependent on, linkages to national and international webs of trade, investment, and politics.<sup>17</sup> The prevalent idea of the Guajira and the Sierra Nevada as places and peoples without history is one more case of “Occidentalism,” that is, a series of representational operations that separates the capitalist world into bounded units, disaggregates their relational histories, turns differences into hierarchies, and naturalizes these representations as factual realities.<sup>18</sup>

Once we widen our gaze to consider the larger region, this vision does not hold. Located in the most septentrional area of South America, with the

islands and the isthmus to the north and west, respectively; the Venezuelan Gulf and Lake Maracaibo to the east; and the Magdalena River to the south, the area was known until the late 1960s as the Greater Magdalena. A bridge between the Caribbean and Andean basins, the Greater Magdalena and its contours corresponded to the colonial Gobernación de Santa Marta, the first area of Spanish exploration and settlement on the South American continent. With the pyramidal Sierra Nevada at the center, expeditionaries founded Santa Marta (1525) on the bay area near the western watershed; Riohacha (1545) on the long coast facing the sea and the peninsula and bordering the northern watershed; and Valledupar (1550) in the great valley between the Sierra Nevada and the Perijá cordillera, next to the southeastern watershed. Through trade with and war against native peoples, each settlement generated its area of influence along its respective watershed.<sup>19</sup> But because climatic and soil conditions, chronic labor scarcity, and demographic dispersion doomed large-scale agriculture in the Gobernación de Santa Marta, raising and trading cattle became the area's only viable economic activity. English, French, and Dutch merchants arrived regularly at various bays and inlets, especially in the upper Guajira peninsula, looking for livestock and hides to exchange for goods and African slaves. For centuries, the socioeconomic life of this "Caribbean without plantation" consisted of contraband commerce, cattle ranching, and an intimate connection with the maritime circuits of the Atlantic world.<sup>20</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, when what had been the Gobernación de Santa Marta became the Department of Magdalena—popularly known as Greater Magdalena to differentiate it from the smaller and contemporary department of the same name—a new export economy emerged in the Andean interior. The prosperity from several coffee booms allowed the existing Liberal and Conservative parties to consolidate. In the process, a new ideology of whiteness as *mestizaje* developed in Colombia.<sup>21</sup> Although the discourse of *mestizaje* celebrated cultural and racial mixture, it also inscribed racialized regional differences "in the spatial ordering" of the nation-state, placed whiteness at the top of the hierarchy, and justified the marginalization of territories and peoples that did not conform to this vision.<sup>22</sup> Building upon Enlightenment conceptions of the voluptuous nature of the New World and nineteenth-century European racial theories, poets, artists, intellectuals, lawyers, diplomats, and politicians imagined a temperate center of the nation located in the Andean region and inhabited by whites and *mestizos* as being the seat of civilization. In contrast, the darker races living in the periphery of

tropical lowlands and agricultural frontiers were predestined to barbarism.<sup>23</sup> Although lowlands and frontiers were not excluded from the nation, their peoples did not exercise citizenship in meaningful ways or benefit from state resources.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to what happened in other Latin American countries, Colombia's coffee booms helped to both fragment the nation along racialized regional differences and exacerbate difficulties in economic, political, and cultural relations between the central state and the peripheries (both tropical lowlands and agricultural frontiers).<sup>25</sup>

Paradoxically, this long-term process of transforming the Greater Magdalena from a corner of the transnational Caribbean world into a frontier of the Colombian nation-state played in its favor during the first half of the twentieth century. The United States was increasingly interested in Colombia because of its strategic location at the gateway of South America and adjacent to the recently completed Panama Canal. This interest contributed to turning the tropical lowlands of the Greater Magdalena into a setting where national governments experimented with various approaches to agrarian modernization.<sup>26</sup> In search of raw materials—and enticed by Colombia's favorable policies for attracting foreign capital—Boston-based United Fruit Company began to invest financial and technological resources into its large-scale agriculture projects located in the most fertile areas of the Sierra Nevada's western watershed. During the following decades, US foreign aid and international development agencies joined the efforts to transform other sections around the mountain range in order to produce tropical crops. In a country that was centered in the Andean region and depended on coffee exports, these foreign interventions helped integrate the national territory, modernize the economy, and consolidate the state. The cultivation, commercialization, and export of coffee, bananas, cotton, and other commodities restructured natural and social landscapes, set up circuits of production and exchange, and created opportunities for Colombians to accumulate capital and become upwardly mobile. As a contact zone where “ideologies, technologies, capital flows, state forms, social identities and material cultures meet,” twentieth-century Greater Magdalena was an important site for the encounter and mutual constitution of the “local” and the “global.”<sup>27</sup>

The marijuana boom of the 1970s was a pit stop in this long history of formation and transformation of region and nation passing through world markets, particularly that of the United States. Indeed, the *bonanza marimbera* was an eruption of layers of socioeconomic contradictions—some of which had colonial origins—that twentieth-century modernizing reforms in



pursuit of agrarian development and nation-state formation revitalized. The marijuana boom of the 1970s spurred a vertical integration of territories—from highlands and foothills to lowlands and littoral—and facilitated the formation of competing social groups and synergies among them—from local elites to peasants, settlers, and urban working and middle classes—all of which made commercial export agriculture feasible and profitable. Fulfilling the promises (albeit temporarily) that modernizing state reforms made but failed to deliver, the marijuana boom succeeded in boosting the region's agricultural productivity, entrepreneurial innovation, capital accumulation, urbanization, and cultural projection.

### MARIJUANA AND COCAINE

Experts have failed to see the *bonanza marimbera* as a chapter in Colombia's history of agrarian modernization, nation-state formation, and integration with the United States. This failure is due to a combination of disciplinary methods with political urgencies marinating in the *mestizo* ideology of the coffee republic, which prevented these analysts from recognizing capitalist dynamism and historical agency in areas that nationalist discourses defined as premodern. When the study of the illicit drug trade consolidated as an academic field in the late 1980s, the marijuana boom had already occurred. Economists, political scientists, and sociologists—invariably white and *mestizo* men from the Andean interior—focused their research on the current war between cocaine drug lords and the state. These scholars typically analyzed either the role of the state or that of the cocaine elites—whose members were also white and *mestizo* men from the Andean interior. Scholars examined structural factors such as rural poverty and Colombia's geostrategic position in relation to consumption markets, or they analyzed the macroeconomic and foreign policy ramifications (in the latter case, especially with regard to the United States) of the new illicit business.<sup>28</sup> The *bonanza marimbera* fell through the cracks.

After Pablo Escobar was killed in late 1993, a revisionist scholarship emerged. Following the death of *El Patrón* (the Boss), the cocaine exportation and wholesale distribution monopolies underwent a reorganization that de-escalated the war between traffickers and governments, thereby eliminating the urgency to study the cartels. Understanding how the long-running conflict and the production and traffic of drugs interacted with each other

became the most pressing need. Economic and social historians, international relations scholars, sociologists, and anthropologists examined the interactions between governments, traffickers, guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the rural and urban working classes that participated in the illicit economies. This literature concluded that the internal conflict contributed to the loss of the state's legitimacy and tenuous territorial presence, which led to a political culture that relied on weak control of individual behavior and high levels of competition and individualism.<sup>29</sup> The recession of the 1970s helped trigger the mutation of these old dynamics and traditions into a new, illicit economy, because it opened a vital social and moral space for private actors to develop alternatives to the economic slump (including drug trafficking).<sup>30</sup> In the process, illicit entrepreneurs displaced traditional elites, assumed state functions, built extensive social bases, and took over entire regions.<sup>31</sup> Despite their valuable contributions, scholars continued to focus on cocaine, the commodity that fueled the country's war.<sup>32</sup>

Anthropologists, cultural critics, educational scholars, and public intellectuals from the former marijuana region, or with personal connections to it, were the only ones looking back. By examining continuities among various cycles of contraband trade in general merchandise and agricultural commodities, these interdisciplinary studies demonstrated that the marijuana boom built upon these patterns, some of which had colonial origins dating back to the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> As contraband commerce depended on interethnic relations between smugglers from diverse racial and national origins and the Wayuu people of the upper Guajira peninsula, where the natural seaports are located, indigenous practices and norms became relevant cultural codes according to which smugglers organized procedures and established hierarchies.<sup>34</sup> This long history of contraband generated a value system that celebrated smuggling as a legitimate strategy for both individuals and groups to attain social recognition.<sup>35</sup> The *bonanza marimbera* was part of the evolution of contraband commerce, and it was also a crucial phase in the "Colombianization" of the Guajira, the region's integration into the nation.<sup>36</sup> However, this insightful literature did not call into question the underlying premise of the absence of the state, and more often than not, the marijuana boom got lost in either *longue-durée* perspectives or cultural analyses of identity that focused exclusively on the local and regional levels, leaving national and international causes and implications of the boom unexamined.

Building upon the revisionist scholarship and interdisciplinary literature, this book presents the *bonanza marimbera* as a history of nation-state

formation and interstate relations in the Americas. But to frame Colombia's first drug boom in this way forces me "to bring the state back in," taking me into muddy waters.<sup>37</sup> Lamenting the weakness or absence of the state is an old tradition in Latin America.<sup>38</sup> In the case of Colombia, the debate on the absence of the state is even more relevant, given that integration into world markets through coffee exports intensified the fragility of the state by strengthening the two political parties through which "geographically fragmented, landed oligarchies maintained regional and local supremacy in the face of challenges from below."<sup>39</sup> In this "nation in spite of itself," sovereignty was increasingly fragmented into regions; thus the *patria chica*—understood as the regional world of commerce, politics, and culture—was a more powerful binder and source of meaning than the nation-state.<sup>40</sup> As a result, questions of hegemony are apropos of what I examine in this book. By observing how political projects "from above" entered into conflict with visions "from below," I understand the state as "a series of decentralized sites of struggles through which hegemony is both contested and reproduced"; in other words, I view the state not as a "centralized institution of sovereign authority" but as an arena of evolving social and cultural relations of power in which public life is regulated.<sup>41</sup> And acknowledging the centrality of regional dynamics, I widen the unit of analysis from the Guajira and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to the Greater Magdalena. By studying this broader region, I analyze the various and interlocking scales in which Colombia's first drug boom brought to completion a long-term process of mutual constitution of region and nation.<sup>42</sup>

In placing marijuana at center stage in the story, I discovered new avenues for linking the history of twentieth-century Colombia with the history of the US hemispheric project. The transient marijuana boom was a bridge that not only connected the coffee republic and the narcotics nation, in terms of political economy, but also ushered in the transition toward a new national culture and identity, which came to fruition when cocaine linked the destinies of Colombia and the United States in various social and cultural ways. By exploring this particular case, I aim to contribute to a new historiography that recognizes the centrality of values and culture in the process of integration between Latin America and the United States, and the role that apparently remote and isolated areas in Latin America and their peoples played in shaping this integration.<sup>43</sup>

Focusing the story of the origins of Colombia's drug trade business on marijuana also invites us to introduce a gender perspective in order to understand the critical role that masculinity played in the business. Women in

Latin America have participated in drug trafficking for generations and in many capacities. As carriers, or mules, women have used the ostensible weakness of their gender to deceive authorities; as business partners, they have resorted to their social capital and sexuality to advance their interests; as bosses, they have operationalized their maternal roles to build networks of relatives and subordinates in pursuit of profits; and as enforcers, they have relied on their fiercest instincts in imposing order through terror and violence.<sup>44</sup> This was not the case with the *bonanza marimbera*. Given the cultural codes of the contraband-smuggling business on which the marijuana boom was built, trafficking marijuana was an exclusively male activity anchored in relationships among men rather than between men and women. At a time when men were losing ground as money earners, being a marijuana trafficker came to be an important vehicle of masculine reconstitution. Showing how and why the political economy and culture of the marijuana business empowered men more than women is one of the contributions of this work.

#### HISTORY AND STORY

This work began as a personal quest to understand the country of my childhood. Because my father's hometown was one of the epicenters of the marijuana boom, my first visit to the region was a family event. In 1988 my younger brother and I came for the first time to stay with our grandmother Nina in San Juan del Cesar, Department of Guajira. Perched on the foothills of the southeastern watershed of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, San Juan extends down to the Cesar riverbank. Because any traces of the *bonanza marimbera* were hidden from public display, to two kids born and raised in Medellín, a city drowning in blood and cocaine, the town looked like a Nativity scene. Surrounded by uncles, aunts, cousins, and neighbors, we found impossible to remember all of their names. Towns, villages, and hamlets dotted a vertical landscape connected by intricate social webs. Indigenous peoples came to San Juan from the mountains and the peninsula to sell their products and visit relatives and *compadres*. And Venezuelan cars, groceries, and TV shows marked the rhythm of daily life in such a natural manner that one forgot this was Colombia.

Sixteen years later, I returned to the Guajira ready to explore as an adult what had dazzled me as a child. By that time, the paramilitaries had taken

over. After years of war against the guerrillas in the Sierra Nevada and between two enemy factions, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) in the early 2000s expanded their reach along the corridor that connects the mountain range with the great valley of the Cesar and Ranchería Rivers, and accessed the natural seaports of the Guajira peninsula for their export-import operations in cocaine and arms.<sup>45</sup> Navigating webs of kinship and *compadrazgo* (relations among *compadres*, that is, parents and godparents) with the help of my family—particularly Uncle Arique, a renowned storyteller and civic leader—I began collecting testimonies on the marijuana boom for a master’s thesis in anthropology.<sup>46</sup> Just a couple of months later, the paramilitary armies massacred the Wayuu people of Bahía Portete, in the upper peninsula, announcing their triumph on the Caribbean coast.<sup>47</sup> Over the following decade, as I returned every summer to conduct research for a PhD dissertation in history, the critical situation only worsened. Every time the national administration of Álvaro Uribe in Bogotá skirmished with the Bolivarian government of Hugo Chávez in Caracas, flows of legal and illegal goods were interrupted, including food, drinking water, and fuel. Malnutrition and starvation were prevalent in vast areas due to droughts and floods, strained relations with Venezuela, the violent displacement of entire towns after the paramilitary takeover, the environmental effects of the open-pit coal mine of El Cerrejón, the corruption that plagued municipal and departmental governments, and the central state’s misguided policies. Meanwhile, attracted by the sharp contrast between the littoral and its beaches, the Sierra Nevada and its snow caps, and the peninsula and its desert, tourists continued to flock to the region.

This book is the product of my having sailed safely through these dangerous waters in search of vantage points from which to observe a neglected problem. Challenges presented themselves at several levels. First, how to research and write on a historical illicit activity whose protagonists used cash and resorted to violence in order to keep their affairs clandestine? Second, how to see through the heavy, gloomy flog of representations and cultural production about drug traffickers more generally without reproducing these “socially constructed archetypes,” which historian Luis Astorga calls “the mythology of the narcotrafficker”?<sup>48</sup> Third, how were we to understand these traffickers in terms of national and global historical processes through which they emerged without reducing them to simplistic dynamics of national and global history?<sup>49</sup>

My solution was to combine methods from journalism, anthropology, and history—the three disciplines in which I am trained—in order to collect the

most diverse array of evidence possible. By juxtaposing and triangulating these myriad sources in my analysis, I drew conclusions based on coincidences and divergences. From journalism, I used methods for locating participants and witnesses across the region, and for conducting unstructured and semi-structured thematic and life-story interviews. Drawing on anthropology, I conducted participant observation, which included listening to songs from the marijuana era in both social and private contexts, writing ethnographic descriptions and notes on various subjects, drawing maps, and personal journaling. And from history, I employed strategies to identify and examine published and unpublished sources from public archives, private family collections, US and Colombian printed media, and libraries and bookstores in various locations throughout Colombia and the United States. Thousands of cups of coffee, hundreds of digital pictures, and dozens of recordings and notebooks later, a vast assemblage of oral, visual, and documentary evidence emerged before me like a jigsaw puzzle. Details of the methods, sources, and protocols for the oral history portion of my research, which merits special attention, are provided in the appendix.

In putting the various pieces of this puzzle together, I have been guided by two powerful metaphors in clarifying the narrative arc of Colombia's marijuana boom. First, the hurricane, the meteorological phenomenon that has leveled human and natural landscapes in the Caribbean since time immemorial.<sup>50</sup> Like a cyclone system, the marijuana export economy formed in the maritime world of commerce and labor and moved inland with great centripetal force. As a uniquely explosive mixture of natural conditions and historical contradictions, this hurricane-like boom was the product of economic models, politics and policies, social reforms and struggles, and worldviews and identities.<sup>51</sup> And, like all hurricanes until 1979, this one also had a female name.<sup>52</sup> Although the scientific term for the plant that is the protagonist of this story is *cannabis*, the term I use is *marijuana*, a composite of two popular Spanish female monikers. Today medicinal and recreational producers, merchants, and consumers use *cannabis* and *marijuana* interchangeably; nevertheless, an increasing number of activists for drug policy reform have begun to question the latter for its racist connotations in favor of the former.<sup>53</sup> Although I recognize the power of words in shaping our political imagination, I use *marijuana* because it was the most common term used by the people who participated in or lived through the Colombian bonanza. Using *cannabis* in this book would be a theatrical posture in the name of political correctness. *Marimba* is the other term (hence *bonanza marimbera* and

*marimberos*, two terms I also employ), which is a euphemism that refers to a musical instrument and is a derivation of *mariamba*, the name that people of African descent on the country's Caribbean coast use for hemp.<sup>54</sup>

The second metaphor that helps clarify the narrative arc is paradise, one of the oldest imaginaries of modernity in the Caribbean. As Europeans searched for a “new world” untouched by the ecological degradation already evident in the “old world,” they accidentally arrived in the Caribbean. The appeal of the tropical paradise where civilization attempted to correct its fall from grace shaped the European imperial project in the Americas for centuries.<sup>55</sup> This “tropical gaze,” or “imperial eye,” was the culmination of centuries of European interaction with Caribbean environments.<sup>56</sup> The *bonanza marimbera*, itself a transient moment of abundance in the paradise of modernity, embodied the fallen Eden of Colombia, where the “forbidden plant” blossomed to challenge patterns of capital accumulation, establish new forms of social mobility, forge novel popular identities, and reconstitute interstate relations with the United States.<sup>57</sup>

This book is thus an effort to step into “paradise” and follow the wake of the hurricane that turned it upside down in three distinctive cycles of ascendance, peak, and decline. In the first part of this book, “Ascendance,” I examine the Greater Magdalena from the early twentieth century until the late 1960s in order to understand how deeply rooted traditions of contraband smuggling and production of tropical export commodities intersected to create the basis for the new marijuana export sector. Here I focus on how various actors engaged in disputes with the state and its two political parties, and I assess what the consequences were of those alliances and conflicts for defining the Greater Magdalena as a region, its role in the country's modernization, and the course of such reforms more generally. I use the terms *Liberal* and *Conservative* (capitalized) to refer to the two main political parties and their members rather than abstract philosophies or political doctrines.<sup>58</sup> In chapter 1, “Wheels of Progress,” I study each of the Greater Magdalena's three sections in relation to the tropical commodities that shaped their physical, socioeconomic, and political contours and underpinned the hectic and accelerated agrarian development of the whole region. This is a work of political history that weaves together local, regional, national, and international interests and struggles in pursuit of productivity, accumulation, and recognition. In chapter 2, “Coming from the Mountain,” I address the beginning of the marijuana business in the late 1960s. Using social history approaches, I profile some of the most prominent smugglers from the rural popular classes

who exported coffee to the United States outside state-sanctioned channels and without paying taxes. I show how they established circuits of routes and alliances that connected them with powerful merchants from the region's urban world, the Andean interior, and the United States, and I describe how they subsequently switched to smuggling marijuana, a new agricultural commodity about which at first they knew nothing.

In the second part of the book, "Peak," I explore the bountiful years between 1972 and 1978, when this inchoate traffic turned into a full-fledged export sector after the emergence of local crops grown exclusively for export. Here I grapple with the thin, often blurred line between the legal and the legitimate to shed light on how producers, intermediaries, and exporters understood their activities as socially sanctioned, therefore legitimate, practices despite being aware that such business practices contravened the law. In chapter 3, "Santa Marta Gold," I use political economy and labor history approaches to reconstruct the inner workings of marijuana cultivation, commercialization, and exportation, and shed light on who did what, when, and why. In chapter 4, "Party Animals," cultural history with a gender perspective on masculinities allows me to explain the rise of the *marimberos*, the emergent class of marijuana merchants who sought to cement their newly acquired economic status through social and cultural projection, achieved by imitating practices established earlier by a much older and more powerful class of agrarian entrepreneurs. In doing so, they opened space for themselves in regional society, though temporarily.

In the third part of the book, "Decline," I address the violent years between 1978 and the mid 1980s, when producers, intermediaries, exporters, and buyers became targets of criminalization, and the intermontane valleys of the Sierra Nevada, the desert plains of the Guajira, and villages, ports, and surrounding cities became militarized settings and, in the process, the marijuana export business collapsed. In chapter 5, "Two Peninsulas," I employ diplomatic history to illuminate the conflictive consensus making between several US and Colombian governments during the 1970s to define the state's response to the growing drug traffic between the two countries, and ultimately to transform the marijuana region into an experimental laboratory that featured new approaches to state control and repression. In chapter 6, "Reign of Terror," I resort to cultural analysis to deconstruct the series of tropes about violence and terror that emerged as a corollary of criminalization and militarization, eclipsing state violence and stereotyping the peoples and territories as savage peripheries of the nation. At the same time, I also



reconstruct the multiple ways in which state-led militarized interventions aggravated existing tensions, intensified competition among traffickers, and made irrelevant the cultural codes of honorable masculinity that had once kept conflicts and violence in check. Following the book's three parts, a brief conclusion summarizes its central arguments and contributions. Finally, in a short appendix I address the methods and protocols used to conduct oral history for this book.

In search of my own roots, I turned away from my hometown of Medellín and its lethal affair with cocaine to cross to the other side of the mirror and discover that there was no "other." From that viewpoint, I offer this panoramic picture of the rise and fall of Colombia's first drug paradise. This is an exercise in historical inquiry and imagination that puts together fragments of evidence in order to understand the constellation of factors that produced a perfect storm, one that subverted life in a corner of the Caribbean and changed Colombia for decades to come.

## TWO

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### *Coming from the Mountain*

#### COFFEE CONTRABAND AND MARIJUANA SMUGGLING

I come from the mountain, / from there, the cordillera, / where I  
left my *compañera* / along with my two little children.

MÁXIMO MÓVIL,  
vallenato composer

ON THE INAUGURATION DAY OF LIBERAL president Carlos Lleras Restrepo, August 7, 1966, an adolescent boy who was nicknamed Chemón gunned down the legendary José Durán. As Durán stood at the door of a pharmacy in San Juan del Cesar drinking a soda, Chemón came in to fill a prescription. While the pharmacist prepared the order, the boy shot the man who had excelled at using motorized vehicles in the contraband business. Born and raised in Caracolí, a hamlet in the southeastern watershed of the Sierra Nevada, in the municipality of San Juan del Cesar, José Durán reached the height of his career during the decade prior to his murder, when new policies for exporting coffee created the ideal conditions for smuggling the bean. Durán took advantage of infrastructure projects that national governments financed to innovate by using trucks and establishing strategic alliances with powerful men in the region and the Andean interior. In doing so, he consolidated his prominence as one of the most feared and admired *contrabandistas* (smugglers) in a land where many could be found. Although his murder was a private affair, since the motivation for the crime was intertwined with a family vendetta, his death had social consequences.<sup>1</sup> It marked the arrival of a new breed of smugglers who built upon practices established by Durán and his cohort to pursue new business opportunities in marijuana.

In this chapter, I weave together the stories of these two generations to demonstrate how coffee contraband paved the way for the marijuana business. I argue that smuggling coffee out of the country and through the Guajira allowed *contrabandistas* to develop novel procedures and cultural



MAP 3. Tropical Commodities. Map by Bill Nelson.

codes to complete the vertical integration of this section of the Greater Magdalena, from highlands to lowlands, as well as the horizontal integration to the Andean interior and US markets. After years of smuggling coffee exclusively, *contrabandistas* began to include small quantities of marijuana in their coffee cargos. This activity was a response to the rise of marijuana smoking as part of countercultural movements in the United States that engaged in fierce battles over state power and imperialism, patriarchal and racial hierarchies, gender roles and mass-media representations. But unlike marijuana

consumers in the United States, and their contemporaries in many places in Latin America, these suppliers of the intoxicant who came of age in the “long sixties” widened the intergenerational gap not in the political and ideological spheres but rather in the commercial and cultural realms.<sup>2</sup> Expanding the notion of the “political” to include economics, identity, gender, and everyday life, this chapter offers another angle with which to view the gradual disintegration of the Greater Magdalena in the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> It focuses particularly on the ways in which the region’s breakdown opened legal and ethical interstices in which a new generation created business opportunities that contravened the law but gained them social legitimacy. By pioneering the marijuana trade, these young men became protagonists in the making of a new and unsanctioned economic identity for which gender, and generation were as relevant as class, party affiliation, and regional origin.<sup>4</sup> At a time when young people took their frustrations from the private to the public sphere and celebrated counterhegemonic conceptions of the world and the self, these young smugglers refurbished older commercial traditions and cultural codes in the hope of taking advantage of the rapid urbanization of the fractured Greater Magdalena and its integration into national and international markets. This chapter tells a story of youth discovering marijuana during “the global sixties,” but from a vantage point other than consumption or dissent.<sup>5</sup>

#### CACHACO MIGRATION AND COFFEE CONTRABAND

While lowlands and foothills underwent dramatic transformations as a result of tropical commodity booms, the opening of the agricultural frontiers in the Greater Magdalena’s highlands intensified with the arrival of peasant families and agricultural workers from the Andean interior who were escaping the bloodiest phase of La Violencia (1946–53) and its aftermath.<sup>6</sup> They headed to the cotton belt and the banana district in search of seasonal jobs and land. Popularly known as *cachacos*, Andean migrants represented both an opportunity and a threat. As a labor force, they constituted a valuable resource, though more so in the rising cotton belt than in the declining banana district.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, as settlers, *cachacos* represented a surplus. Landed elites expanded their farms onto lowlands, foothills, and even intermontane valleys, and feared the *cachacos* as competitors for land.<sup>8</sup> *Cachacos* provided cheap labor during cultivation and harvest seasons, but were harassed the rest of the time by private shock troops and local and police



FIGURE 5. A *cachaco* coffee grower during the harvest, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, November 1967. *El Espectador* photographic archive, Bogotá.

authorities working in favor of landowners. Despite their contested arrival, *cachacos* took advantage of their numbers as well as the knowledge they brought with them to colonize the agricultural frontiers and make peasant agriculture sustainable in the highlands. In temperate valleys that were similar to their places of origin in the Andean region, *cachacos* founded new hamlets, such as Cuesta Plata, Costa Rica, Marquetalia, Las Flores, Palmarito, Soplaviento, and San Pablo.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, they helped consolidate the coffee belt in the Greater Magdalena. According to the first national coffee census conducted in 1932, 682 coffee farms occupied 5,510 hectares in the region; by 1955, there were 2,088 farms over an expanse of 17,356 hectares.<sup>10</sup>

In the Sierra Nevada and Perijá, *cachacos* reproduced the patterns of agricultural colonization that their elders had established in the *eje cafetero* (the coffee-growing region on the western and central cordilleras of the Andean interior). They penetrated to the mountain ranges through mule trails, dirt roads, and rivers in order to find the *corte* (edge), that is, the boundary between cultivated areas and virgin forests.<sup>11</sup> They chose their sites and estab-

lished pastures by slashing and burning. Around the house they planted corn, sugar cane, malanga, yucca, and *ñame*. In fields further out, they cultivated coffee among bananas, rice, and beans. In the interior gardens they sowed medicinal herbs, decorative plants, pumpkins, and fruits.<sup>12</sup> They consumed most of the starch crops, as these comprised the principal component of their diet.<sup>13</sup> They also kept some cattle for household milk and meat consumption and to obtain petty cash in local markets. Theirs was a modest economy of subsistence built on the efforts and sacrifice of the whole family unit. As *vallenato* composer Máximo Móvil explains with impeccable rhyme and rhythm:

I come from the mountain,  
from there, the cordillera,  
where I left my *compañera* [partner, companion]  
along with my two little kids.  
I bring my little donkey well loaded,  
sell my load and get back.  
I plan to return very early [in the morning]  
because my woman is waiting for me,  
my poor companion who with much suffering,  
sorrows, and torments,  
accompanies me in those lands.<sup>14</sup>

The coffee bush takes five years to yield its first harvest. When *cachacos* began to produce at full capacity, the national government changed the rules governing the bean's circulation, which contributed to an unexpected transformation of the region's economic life for the following decade. Since the end of World War II, the National Federation of Coffee Growers, known as Fedecafé, had managed the country's share of the US coffee market as stipulated in the Inter-American Coffee Agreement of 1940.<sup>15</sup> Fedecafé's control created tensions between the government and the industrial bourgeoisie, whose interests diverged from those of the coffee sector. Hence, while Liberal and Conservative peasants killed each other in yet another civil war (La Violencia), coffee growers and industrialists aligned with the Liberals and Conservatives, respectively, thereby deepening party divisions, and fought for the right to define the country's macroeconomic policies.<sup>16</sup> A new trade agreement between Bogotá and Washington, signed in April 1951 by Conservative president Laureano Gómez (1950–53) and intended to supersede López Pumarejo's treaty of 1935, resolved the quarrel. It established new coffee quotas and stable US coffee prices, among other basic domestic

protections to Colombian goods.<sup>17</sup> But the plundering of coffee crops on abandoned farms during La Violencia kept exports at high levels, skewing the country's balance of payments.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the national government prohibited the exportation of coffee outside Fedecafé's sanctioned channels, contributing to a surge of coffee contraband, which in turn spawned a flood of foreign currency into Colombia, aggravating its inflation. The root problem of this vicious circle was the structure of the coffee economy—the bulk of Colombia's coffee came from small farms that exported through an interminable chain of intermediaries who controlled the means of exchange and were willing to do anything to circumvent restrictions on the circulation of the bean and profit from exporting without paying taxes.<sup>19</sup>

The Greater Magdalena was one of the country's two most active areas for smuggling coffee out of the country.<sup>20</sup> The long tradition of contraband in the Guajira peninsula, its proximity to two of the main stopovers on the way to US markets (Maracaibo and Aruba), and the consolidation of a coffee belt in the Sierra Nevada and Perijá after the arrival of the *cachacos*, all contributed to the region's importance in the new smuggling business. Heretofore, coffee had never been part of the smugglers' portfolio in the Guajira, because Fedecafé controlled the commercialization of harvests and smuggling coffee was not yet a profitable activity.<sup>21</sup> Export contraband of agricultural commodities was limited to products that were either native to the peninsula steppe and harvested in Wayuu territory, such as divi-divi, or raised and produced in the great valley, such as cattle and hides. The deleterious effect of the "degermanization" of the Guajira during World War II, which disrupted the networks that controlled these exchanges, left smugglers empty-handed. A decade later, coffee contraband turned out to be the opportunity they had been waiting for.

Because coffee smuggling was largely a creation of the state's restrictions and prohibitions, the repressive measures the national government took to deter an activity that the same state unwittingly fostered were destined to fail.<sup>22</sup> As part of a wider effort to erase the legacies of the Liberal Republic and close ranks with the United States after the ratification of the new trade agreement, Conservative president Laureano Gómez sought to repress coffee contraband by increasing surveillance of Puerto López, the main port of the Guajira, which his adversary López Pumarejo had inaugurated in 1935.<sup>23</sup> But the only lasting effect of Gómez's orders was a song that is now part of the country's folkloric repertoire; it tells the story of what happened the night in 1953 when the crew of the *Almirante Padilla*, a frigate that fought in Korea alongside ships of the US Navy, received the order to disembark at Puerto

López and confiscate thousands of coffee sacks.<sup>24</sup> The song laments the fate of Silvestre “Tite” Socarrás, great grandchild of the Frenchman who introduced coffee in the Perijá in the mid-nineteenth century, and one of the smugglers who lost everything in the raid.<sup>25</sup> Back in his hometown of Villanueva, Socarrás drank to his misfortune with his friend Rafael Escalona, a young composer of vallenato songs who later immortalized the event:

There, up in the Guajira,  
where contraband is born,  
Almirante Padilla  
arrived in Puerto López  
and left it in ruins. . . .  
Bandit pirate ship,  
Saint Thomas, be my witness,  
I promise you to throw a party  
when a submarine  
sinks it in Korea.<sup>26</sup>

But not all smugglers had a run of bad luck like “poor Tite, poor Tite, / poor Tite Socarrás,” and during the rest of the 1950s and most of the 1960s, coffee contraband was a profitable and respected commercial activity in this section of the Greater Magdalena.<sup>27</sup> To a young rural man like José Durán, who reached adulthood when the cattle-ranching elite ventured into cotton production and the agrarian reform sparked fierce struggles over land as well as natural and state resources, smuggling coffee provided opportunities that were lacking in agriculture. Durán thus positioned himself along with his partners as “intermediaries of various social groups that would hardly have connected without them.”<sup>28</sup> This generation of *contrabandistas* was aided by the new restrictions on coffee circulation, imposed by the military dictatorship of General Rojas Pinilla (1953–1957) to manipulate the value of the peso and address the problems of the currency market that the previous president could not resolve.<sup>29</sup> Smugglers like Durán were not the only ones using the new policies to their advantage. Coffee contraband became such a popular activity during the dictatorship that even Fedecafé was accused of participating in the smuggling endeavors.<sup>30</sup> Official statistics from 1956 estimate that around 100 million coffee sacks had been smuggled out of the country that year.<sup>31</sup>

With larger and more frequent coffee loads traversing the roads, mule trails, and rivers that crossed the Greater Magdalena to the Guajira, smugglers consolidated two routes.<sup>32</sup> According to Callo, a former coffee smuggler



who welcomed me into his house in Riohacha to share memories of the past, one route extended along the coast. Drinking a cup of the dark, sweet coffee customary in the Guajira, he explained that he worked with roasting companies in Barranquilla that bought tons of coffee for domestic consumption but also sold a portion to smugglers for export. He transported the sacks in trucks through the Troncal del Caribe, the paved road that connected the towns along the coast, which at the time ended north of Santa Marta. Where the Troncal ended, they unloaded the cargo and transferred it to canoes to move it from river to river, thus avoiding the open sea, where the coastguard could easily catch them. When they finally reached the first town in the Guajira, they transferred the loads to trucks again and drove to warehouses in Riohacha, or to the natural seaports of the upper peninsula, to ship it to Aruba or the Panama Canal's free trade zone.

The second route followed the old "Jerusalem road" from the Magdalena River across the great valley to the natural seaports of the Guajira. The Troncal de Oriente, the paved road that connected the eastern cordillera with the great valley, was completed up to Valledupar, which smugglers therefore used as a transshipment point. Coffee was brought "easily from Santander and Medellín in caravans of 100 to 200 trucks," Callo remembered.<sup>33</sup> Yim Daza Noguera, mayor of San Juan del Cesar during Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship, explained to me that the local army garrison, "the [Rondón] Group [of Mechanized Cavalry,] pulled you over, and they gave you a voucher to continue to Aruba" if they found everything in place. If not, they seized your freight.<sup>34</sup> The existence of a coffee belt in the Sierra Nevada and Perijá helped smugglers to develop new procedures to trick authorities. For example, farmers claimed exportation permits from the Rondón Group offices to later sell them to smugglers, who used them to pass through checkpoints.<sup>35</sup> Bribes paid to customs agents and army commanders were also standard practice.

Along the two main routes, *contrabandistas* offered transportation from Santa Marta, Valledupar, and Barranquilla to storage points in Riohacha or Maicao, as well as to the natural ports of the upper peninsula and, for those who owned ships, Aruba. In both trucks and boats, they charged the exporter per sack. Raúl told me, while rocking in his chair in the living room of his house in Riohacha, that after years of working in land transportation he decided to buy a boat because "I got better profits." He recalled he had between six and eight trucks, but also managed his brothers' and partners', "like 20 trucks in total." He charged in dollars for each sack of coffee transported in the boat, and also for each sack transported in the trucks.<sup>36</sup> Silvio,

a sailor who worked for José Durán and many others, remembered that he and his associates mostly smuggled coffee produced locally and commercialized “in the *provincia*: Barrancas, Papayal, Hato Nuevo, Fonseca, and we transported it over dirt roads” to the ports, and, “depending on where customs was, we moved to another port,” he added.<sup>37</sup> Journalist Consuelo Araújo Noguera explained that coffee cargoes, “like marijuana decades later,” were shipped by a single exporter “who was the boss of the business.” But behind these exporters there were two or three powerful families of merchants from the Andean interior or the coast that provided the money and thereby made larger profits.<sup>38</sup>

Smugglers also purchased coffee with their earnings and added this supply to larger cargoes, which they shipped to Aruba or Panama, where buyers paid them directly. “The coffee we bought for [the exporters] was transported by freight,” Justiniano Mendoza, José Durán’s *compadre* and partner, told me while drinking coffee on my grandmother Nina’s patio in San Juan del Cesar. “When we bought our own coffee, we sent it directly to Aruba. . . . Thus we went up [to the upper Guajira] full, and went down full,” Mendoza pointed out.<sup>39</sup> That is, they traveled to the ports loaded with coffee and came back down full of whiskey, cigarettes, and general merchandise, which they later transported to various destinations along the coast. Those who smuggled thousands of sacks “did not bring merchandise back but dollars, which they later sold in Barranquilla, Bogotá, or Medellín,” Raúl explained, specifying that those who exported smaller cargoes “were the ones who brought back whiskey and cigarettes.”<sup>40</sup> Smuggling manufactured and luxury goods back into the country made the circuit more profitable for those who moved smaller quantities of coffee or worked on their own. Large exporters of coffee rarely imported contraband.

All these activities required cooperation among disparate socioeconomic actors spread across a vast geographic area. Smugglers thus occupied a middle position that earned them both profits and respect. Although rural people in the Greater Magdalena had experienced class differentiation before, the multiple changes that came about during the postwar period and La Violencia accelerated this process: the wave of migration of violently dispossessed *cachacos*, the colonization of the mountainous agricultural frontiers with coffee, and the consolidation of a coffee belt; the macroeconomic policies that resulted from new alliances between the coffee growers’ guild and industrialists, Liberals and Conservatives, and the US government; infrastructure projects that created new physical and social landscapes; and the booming

postwar markets in Europe and the United States, where working- and middle-class people relied on caffeine to maintain high levels of productivity.<sup>41</sup> Young rural men like José Durán turned coffee contraband into a maelstrom of dispersed groups pursuing similar interests.

Outlaws emerge when “the jaws of the dynamic modern world seize the static communities in order to destroy and transform them,” Eric Hobsbawm once wrote.<sup>42</sup> In this case, however, one can hardly tell what was “static” and what was “dynamic,” as old and new forms of social relations of commerce combined to define the course of change. For example, traditional bonds of kinship, including *compadrazgo* (relations among *compadres*, or parents and godparents), that customarily mediated social relations among competing actors in the smuggling business could not contain the changes unleashed by a greater integration of the region into national and international markets. However, kinship and *compadrazgo* continued to define alliances and discords. Take Durán and his peers as examples. They followed the century-old practice of interethnic marriages with women from wealthy Wayuu clans, because the Wayuu were an essential part of the smuggling business, providing guidance, surveillance, and labor in loading and unloading goods. Kinship relations offered smugglers “safe conduct” and a valuable “relational capital” with the extended families that controlled the natural seaports.<sup>43</sup> Simultaneously, smugglers cultivated friendships and *compadrazgos* with *criollo* men (nonindigenous native people) in Liberal and Conservative networks of clientelism in order to secure a host of strategically placed allies inland. Justiniano Mendoza boasted of a powerful cattle rancher, cotton grower, and Liberal party politician who used to praise him by saying: “You are a man who is worth a lot . . . there might be rich people here and so on, but somebody with more human relationships than Mendoza there is none.”<sup>44</sup> Mendoza added: “I was friends with the *pueblacho* [the people], but my people were the *cocotudos* [the rich].”<sup>45</sup> According to Mendoza, Durán followed a similar pattern of forging alliances with both elites and indigenous peoples of the peninsula in order to guarantee his autonomy on the ground.

Another indispensable element to *contrabandistas*’ sovereign control of business operations that shows how “old” and “new” social relations of commerce intertwined was an evolving knowledge of territories and their people. The infrastructure projects that Rojas Pinilla financed improved the old roads that the Liberal Republic had built two decades before, which made it possible for trucks to drive these routes for the first time.<sup>46</sup> But neither the Troncal del Caribe nor the Troncal de Oriente along the littoral and the great

valley, respectively, reached all the way up to the peninsula. Without paved roads it was difficult to reach the natural seaports because of Guajira's characteristic cycles of rain and drought. Smugglers required a deep understanding of both the area's geography and its people in order to evade authorities, sandstorms, mud, quicksand, and lands that belonged to clans allied with competitors. Durán was one of the few *contrabandistas* "who could put the merchandise in the natural ports; nobody else could pass through, it was hard," my Uncle Arique assured me. "José went on evading guards, he played games, he wore costumes, he dressed as a soldier, he disguised his cars, he painted them like customs cars."<sup>47</sup> He even mobilized his social capital in pursuit of business. My uncle recalled that Durán paid cantina owners to play one of his favorite vallenato songs, "La perra" (The Bitch) as loud as possible as a signal that the roads were clear. Thus, when he heard the verses, "Here comes the bitch / that was biting me, / brave bitch / that bit her master," he knew he had a green light.<sup>48</sup>

With the creation of the Intendencia de la Guajira in 1954, Rojas Pinilla not only disgruntled the cotton elite and shaped the expansion of the cotton belt, but also created the territorial framework for the rise of a renewed cultural identity in which *contrabandistas* became aspirational figures.<sup>49</sup> When the Intendencia merged some of the *criollo* towns of the Greater Magdalena with the Wayuu territory in the upper peninsula, smugglers found their cultural mobility between the two worlds legally sanctioned, and they became active agents in the formation of a new, Guajira-based identity not exclusively indigenous. Their kinship relations with Wayuu clans and their knowledge of the peninsula's territories and ecologies informed their understanding of their unique skills in moving commodities. Borrowing from the Wayuu gender code—according to which ideal men are like Juya (the male god of rain, mobile and unique) and ideal women are like Pulowi (the female god of drought, fixed and manifold)—they unleashed a process of "counter-acculturation," involving nonindigenous people's adaptation of indigenous patterns, which served as basis for their new identities as *guajiros* and *contrabandistas*, and for the defense of an economic vocation that the Andean-centered nation-state considered illicit.<sup>50</sup>

One of Durán and Mendoza's deeds illustrates this point and suggests the ways in which this new ethos defined smugglers' understanding of their position within the Colombian nation-state. One night in 1963, customs agents pulled over Lobo Loco (Crazy Wolf), a red Ford pickup truck that was driven by an intrepid young man known by the same moniker. That night, Durán

and Mendoza traveled together in a Toyota jeep named La Ley de Texas (the Law of Texas), which was working as *la mosca* (the fly), a smaller car with no cargo that was sent ahead to confirm that roads were free of authorities, or to bribe any officer encountered.<sup>51</sup> As per the routine, Durán and Mendoza were armed with grenades, an M1 semiautomatic, and their personal .45 revolvers. They came from Valledupar, where they picked up dozens of sacks of coffee and headed to Riohacha to deliver them to the exporter. Because the exporter told them that customs had already been bribed, they thought this was a mistake. They got off *la mosca* and asked for the commander of the checkpoint. “We need to talk to him, because we are *guajiros*, and you are in the Guajira, and in our land, contraband never gets lost,” they told customs officers before they offered them money. But they failed to persuade them, so Durán ordered the drivers to flee, while he and Mendoza defended their escape with gunfire. The shooting lasted an eternity, Mendoza remembered, until Durán threw grenades to create a smoke screen that allowed them all to scamper away on foot. Days later, the exporter in Riohacha used his connections to recuperate the confiscated coffee and truck, but neither the sacks nor Lobo Loco were returned. Meanwhile, Mendoza and Durán celebrated their exploit with a *parranda* (party) lasting several days, held in a Wayuu *ranchería* (village) where Durán had a wife.<sup>52</sup>

Now that the Intendencia’s jurisdiction embraced both the northernmost part of the great valley and the indigenous territory of the peninsula, Durán and Mendoza presumed that they were ruled by a different set of norms, like the Wayuu. Anthropologist Giangina Orsini Aarón recorded a strikingly similar story in Maicao.<sup>53</sup> Although the outcome was different, the arguments and presumptions were the same. Smugglers felt excluded from the political body of the Colombian nation-state and therefore not accountable to its regulations and legislation. And because of their kinship with the Wayuu, who considered them clan members, their recourse to an exceptional sovereignty over the Guajira was genuine. They understood their activities as illegal vis-à-vis the Colombian state, but also as socially legitimate—a customary practice that deserved special consideration—and expected state agents to accept their bribes as personalized taxes. In fact, as anthropologist Diana Bocarejo concludes in her ethnography of mule drivers’ ethics in the bonanzas of the Sierra Nevada’s western watershed, “What is lawful and legal [to these drivers] is opportunistic, as the state apparatus mainly legalizes what is convenient only for those involved with or in close relation to state bureaucracies and politics.”<sup>54</sup>

Fearless smugglers, Durán and Mendoza had no problem in resorting to violence to ensure their success. Eliminating competition and monopolizing routes made violence an indispensable instrument in the smugglers' toolkit. Violent disputes among them, and between them and state agents, were the visible manifestation of the constant struggle to control relations of exchange.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, violence was more than a practical device, as it was also another cultural pattern of social organization that they borrowed from the Wayuu, adapted to their specific needs and reproduced through the code of honor.<sup>56</sup> Anthropologist Anne Marie Losonczy argues that in Dibulla, a coastal town south of Riohacha, the use of violence among smugglers was an identity formation mechanism, as conflicts never involved people beyond the outer limits of extended kin.<sup>57</sup>

For Durán and Mendoza, violence had been part of their lives before they started working together. On June 12, 1954, Mendoza got into a machete fight with Crisóstomo Rodríguez in Hatico de los Indios, a hamlet in the Sierra Nevada, in the municipality of San Juan del Cesar.<sup>58</sup> After Mendoza murdered Rodríguez, the Rodríguez family needed to restore the wounded honor and the social balance between the two families, but each attempt to settle the dispute unleashed a spiral of pain, anger, and revenge. Uncle Arique, who was a friend of both families, did the arithmetic for me: at the end of the first year, "the fight was tied; Justiniano killed Crisóstomo, Damaso [Rodríguez] killed Arturo [Mendoza], Elías [Mendoza] killed Damaso, and Santos [Rodríguez] killed Pedro Segundo [Mendoza]."<sup>59</sup> The Rodríguezes got into another fight with other relatives, the Mejía family, to which José Durán's wife belonged. Then Durán fought with his Mendoza brothers-in-law after a failed business venture with a common *compadre* who smuggled *chirrinchi* (moonshine).<sup>60</sup> Rumors that one of the Mendoza brothers was having an affair with one of the Mejía sisters did not help.<sup>61</sup> By the time Durán and Mendoza began to work together in the early 1960s, five families were involved in a war. They managed to be partners for a few years, while killing others for honor and in revenge. On August 7, 1966, Chemón, a member of the Mendoza family, gunned down José Durán—the most feared man among those involved in the fight, he who was rumored to be the devil, capable of metamorphosing into a stack of plantains—and the conflict deescalated.<sup>62</sup>

Popularly known as vendettas, these wars among smuggler families were similar to the feuds that characterized medieval and early modern Mediterranean families, whence the term *vendetta* comes. Historian Edward Muir argues that the ideal of masculinity as "performative excellence," which

required a “good man” to engage in a public display of physical risk and aggressiveness, was the norm in societies where laws were inconsistent at best and in most places absent.<sup>63</sup> Smugglers in the Guajira lived in that kind of society, but not because their social dynamics were archaic or feudal. On the contrary, the state of lawlessness in the mountainous Greater Magdalena was a by-product of the modernizing reforms that reconfigured the physical, social, and cultural landscapes but failed to offer alternatives to disparate social groups with which they could adapt to the increasingly interconnected economy. In their efforts to navigate these changes, men who sought to make a living in commerce rather than agriculture adopted the Wayuu code of honor for conflict resolution, eliminating the phases of negotiation and reparation that were central to indigenous people, and making “blood price” the first and only option.<sup>64</sup> The complexity of sexual relations and kinship ties among multiple families that lived in closed proximity often helped precipitate warfare. Once a war was set off, it evolved through specific attacks on selective targets rather than through combat between massed forces.<sup>65</sup> Men were the ones who killed and got killed. They were familiar with the use of weapons because generally they were part of the contraband, and because rural men learned to hunt when they were young; some, like Durán, even went through military conscription. Women set their men on enemies, decided who would perpetrate the next attack, and mourned the dead.<sup>66</sup>

The rumor about Durán as an evil creature with supernatural skills, and the importance of his death in the de-escalation of the vendetta, reflects the symbolic power of the *contrabandista* in the collective unconscious of a rural society going through rapid class differentiation, urbanization, and integration into the national and international markets. To be a *contrabandista*, a man had to display a complex and multifaceted set of attributes that the masculine figure of the devil represented. A “mix of agility, mobility, cleverness, vitality, tenacity, astuteness, prodigality, physical resistance, relational talent, and aggressive attitude” was expected of them, as Losonczy describes the ideal.<sup>67</sup> Anthropologist Michael Taussig found that in the sugar belt of the Cauca River valley, in southwestern Colombia, the devil was “intrinsic to the process of proletarianization of the peasant and to the commoditization of the peasant’s world.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the people of the new Guajira (first *intendencia*, then department) interpreted the enhanced economic and social capacities of smugglers in terms of their folk beliefs, rooted in traditions of sorcery, witchcraft, and *curanderismo* (healing rituals).<sup>69</sup> These popular ideas surrounding *contrabandistas* reflected efforts to make sense of new



FIGURE 6. “Here, life meets eternity.” Entrance to the San Juan del Cesar cemetery, where all family vendettas ended. Photo by the author.

forms of creation and destruction, growth and stagnation, accumulation and destitution.

In waging war, smuggling goods, cultivating mythical public personas, and engaging in close relationships with various social groups, these young men breathed new life into exporting contraband agricultural products, an enterprise through which they participated in national circuits of capital accumulation and forged ties with powerful sectors in the Andean interior. Negotiating their position as *guajiros* within the nation, these smugglers assimilated indigenous cultural patterns of social organization (i.e., the Wayuu code of honor) in order to legitimize practices that were prohibited under Colombian law but were nonetheless socially accepted and respected.



The routes, procedures, identities, and ethos of coffee *contrabandistas* served as springboards to a more profitable business in marijuana, placing these men at the crest of international currents.

#### MARIJUANA CONSUMPTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

Marijuana arrived in Colombia by sea. The habit and culture of smoking reflected a legacy of labor migration and circuits of commerce that connected the banana district and the ports of Santa Marta and Barranquilla with the Greater Caribbean.<sup>70</sup> Exclusively consumed by the initiated, marijuana in Colombia embodied “‘globalizing forces’ in the Atlantic economy.”<sup>71</sup> As in Jamaica, whence the habit of cultivating and smoking marijuana spread to the insular and continental Caribbean after indentured servants from India introduced the practice, the plant in Colombia was not an export commodity but the intoxicant of choice of people living and working in undesirable conditions.<sup>72</sup> A man recognized in the town of Taganga in the Santa Marta Bay area for his prodigious memory and talent for storytelling, Pebo asked me for a pound of coffee and a pack of cigarettes in exchange for his time. While we drank the coffee and he smoked the cigarettes, he told me that when he was an adolescent in the 1930s, in “Ciénaga there was the best, the real deal in marijuana, and there I became a *fumón* [heavy user].” Candidly, he added, “Then came the prostitutes, the brothels, and we all fell for the illusion, we lived off the women, there was nobody who worked.” Pebo affirmed that sailors who worked on the ships that transported refined sugar from Cuba to the banana district brought marijuana with them; along with Barranquilla merchants who also promoted marijuana seeds, this introduction stimulated the initial crops in the Sierra Nevada. Mocho Zenón was one of the first investors from Barranquilla to get involved in marijuana cultivation; he paid “César Sánchez, and his whole family, and they moved to the Sierra [Nevada], because they were workers there, and planted the seed.”<sup>73</sup> Despite his old age, Pebo’s recollections are consistent with what scholars have found in other localities in the area.<sup>74</sup>

Marijuana was initially produced for local consumption among men and women of the lowest status rather than for an international market. The habit was popular among the proletariat in the country’s two poles of agrarian development—the Greater Magdalena’s banana district, and the Andean

coffee region and sugar belt along the Cauca River valley, between the western and central cordilleras. In the Andean interior, crops grew in numerous dispersed areas that were easily concealed among other cash crops and where the urban and rural worlds battled to establish a border: Manizales got its supplies from neighboring Villamaría; Medellín from nearby Bello; and Cali from Buga.<sup>75</sup> In cities, marijuana users were also proletarians: factory and street workers, artisans, musicians, pimps, prostitutes, and con artists. Brothels, cantinas, *fritangas* (fried-food shops), theaters, and hotels sold marijuana in cigarettes that cost a few cents each.<sup>76</sup>

The artists and intellectuals who frequented these places, and were known to smoke, played a key role in spreading the habit to other social classes and elevating to poetic heights what mainstream society considered a harmful vice. Porfirio Barba Jacob, one of Colombia's most celebrated authors, symbolizes this generation of *maribuanos*, as regular consumers were known at the time.<sup>77</sup> A journalist by profession and wanderer by vocation, Barba Jacob traveled the continent: Barranquilla, Peru, New York, Cuba, Mexico, and most Central American countries. He wrote for newspapers and magazines and had a reputation for getting in trouble with authorities for his homosexuality, anticlericalism, and radicalism.<sup>78</sup> Criticized for his late romanticism, Barba Jacob's most important legacy is perhaps having introduced younger readers to Latin America's cosmopolitan bohemia.<sup>79</sup> "The lady of the burning hair," as he called marijuana in a poem by the same title, was part of his world and a recurrent topic in his poetry.<sup>80</sup> He bragged about planting it everywhere he went, even in New York City's Central Park.<sup>81</sup> And with his verses, Colombia's damned poet represented the type of user that characterized the earliest domestic marijuana market: marginal members of the most dynamic social sectors undergoing a rapid process of urbanization and connected to international flows of people and cultural practices.

For decades, marijuana was just a minor domestic affair. The expansion of the national market and the creation of a more robust legal framework for its control formed two interconnected aspects of the country's postwar modernization. During the height of La Violencia in 1947, when Conservative president Mariano Ospina Pérez created the Ministry of Agriculture and appointed Pedro Castro Monsalvo to develop the legal and institutional framework for the cotton belt, one of the measures was to import *cannabis indica* seeds from India for the textile industry. Rumor has it that these seeds spread outside industrial channels where they were used to produce textile fibers, and contributed to the proliferation of marijuana crops in the Sierra

Nevada de Santa Marta and the Cauca River valley.<sup>82</sup> I found no evidence to prove or disprove this theory. However, the evidence is irrefutable that the state made a series of efforts to restrict the plant to industrial uses and thereby comply with the Geneva Conventions of 1925 and 1931 that regulated the manufacture, distribution, and use of drugs, which the country ratified in 1930 and 1933, respectively.<sup>83</sup> With Decree 896 in 1947, Ospina Pérez penalized the cultivation, distribution, and sale of coca and marijuana, and he ordered local sanitary authorities to destroy crops. With Decree 1858 in 1951, Gómez declared that “malefactors are those who cultivate, elaborate, commercialize or in any way make use or induce another to use marijuana.”<sup>84</sup> With Decree 0014 in 1955, Rojas Pinilla increased the sentences for cultivation, trade, and use by two and seven years.<sup>85</sup> These laws contributed to a tenfold growth of the inmate population in the country, from 53 people incarcerated for marijuana-related crimes in 1956 to 597 in 1963.<sup>86</sup>

Some of these “malefactors” served sentences in isolated penal colonies. The archives of Araracuara, an agricultural prison located in the eastern lowlands, preserved more than a dozen cases of marijuana-related crimes that were prosecuted while these new decrees were enforced.<sup>87</sup> There were proceedings, for example, against José Manuel Vanegas Cardona and his accomplices, which took place from March to September of 1954. Out of the six people arrested for three pounds of dried marijuana stored in sacks in a farm in Calarcá in the coffee region, only three were charged: forty-six-year-old José Manuel Vanegas and brothers Israel, twenty-one, and Julio Ernesto Pérez, twenty-four. The judge decided to give Israel, the youngest, two years, as he proved during trial to be a “peasant-like, good-natured, naïve young boy”; the judge ruled that on his brother Julio Ernesto and partner José Manuel Vanegas “should fall the full force of the harsh law.” Each got a sentence of five years because “the Machiavelli-like deeds of these two perverts” constituted “perhaps, the most harmful [crime] for society” as “its consequences are incalculable.” Furthermore, the judge stated that “it is competence on the part of authorities [to cut] on time, from the root, . . . the plentiful ramification of countless evils.”<sup>88</sup>

Enforcing the new laws gradually became more politicized. The National Front, fully committed to containing Cuba, set the tone for a new discourse about marijuana that merged anticommunism with Catholic moralism. According to historian Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, religious and civic leaders as well as coffee entrepreneurs in Caldas, the largest department in the coffee region, believed that Cuban penetration was turning the peasant Liberal

armies that had fought La Violencia and had not demobilized in the amnesties of 1953 and 1958 into a guerrilla movement. In response to their outcry, the departmental government enforced the anti-marijuana laws.<sup>89</sup> *Bandoleros*—the term used for the remnants of the Liberal guerrillas—assumed bombastic aliases such as Tarzan, Sangrenegra (black blood), Chispas (spark), Venganza (vengeance), Desquite (retaliation), Veneno (poison), and Peligro (danger), and with their noms de guerre circulated stories of their activities and lifestyles, which included smoking marijuana.<sup>90</sup> These rumors helped cultivate an aura of fear and legend that was essential to their survival.<sup>91</sup> They also fed a media discourse that justified a series of police campaigns whereby local authorities pretended to impose the rule of law, as “a ‘theater’ or forum” intended as a form of state-sanctioned “pedagogic work.”<sup>92</sup>

Between law enforcement and the shaping of public opinion, a discourse that linked the moral decadence of marijuana to the political degeneration of *bandolerismo* gradually took shape. In fact, *bandoleros* were weaker in those areas where there was an actual guerilla movement. Historians Gonzalo Sánchez and Donny Meertens argue that their strongholds were zones where peasant communities “suffered the effects of governmental state terrorism without being able to articulate their own forms of resistance.”<sup>93</sup> During the war, peasant armies had been directly connected to the Liberal party and its local leaders. But once the Liberal elites reached an agreement with their Conservative enemies to support, first, the military Rojas Pinilla dictatorship and, second, the National Front, they delegitimized their peasant allies as political actors. Local merchants, landowners, and politicians pulled back their support, and state forces began persecuting them. Sánchez and Meertens contend that violence worsened in the 1960s after the institutionalization of the National Front, not because of Cuban penetration but because a new generation of fighters came of age who had been raised during the war and for whom “the only meaning of their actions was an exercise of retaliation and vengeance.”<sup>94</sup> The destitute and traumatized peasant youth who made up *bandolero* armies allegedly smoked marijuana before committing crimes, an image used by the local media to create a “moral panic” that helped authorities publicize the values of a Catholic anticommunist state.<sup>95</sup>

“The full force of the harsh law,” however, was not restricted to *bandoleros* or farmers in rural areas; dissatisfied urban youth were also targeted. In 1958, the same year that Liberals and Conservatives inaugurated the National Front, a group of young poets and writers from the country’s largest cities announced the formation of Nadaísmo, an artistic and literary group inspired

by *nada* (nothing) and whose aim was to break with the asphyxiating Catholicism and provincialism that they believed characterized Colombia.<sup>96</sup> Nadaísmo followed no ideology and dictated no artistic precepts; its followers were an agglomeration of “diverse discontents under one single aesthetic manifestation.”<sup>97</sup> They professed free love, vagrancy, and smoking marijuana. When accused of imitating European vanguards, Gonzalo Arango, Nadaísmo’s leader, responded with a lesson in history: they had, rather, originated in the aftermath of La Violencia, which Arango conceptualized as “a change of ‘rhythm,’ historical and violent, that unhinged the structures of society and spiritual values of the Colombian man.”<sup>98</sup> In one of his most widely circulated poems, Arango highlighted the historical connection between *nadaístas* and *bandoleros*. “I, a poet, in the same circumstances of oppression, misery, fear, and persecution, would have been a *bandolero*,” he wrote in *Elegía a Desquite*; “that’s why I wrote this elegy to ‘Desquite,’ because with the same possibilities I had, he could have been called Gonzalo Arango.”<sup>99</sup> From the late 1950s until the early 1970s, when various events (including Arango’s death in a car crash) dispersed the movement, *nadaístas* sought to lay waste to every symbol that was held sacred.<sup>100</sup> Their belief that “in Colombia there was only mediocrity and crappiness” got them in trouble; while they “experimented with everything,” *nadaísta* Elmo Valencia said, “the establishment fucked with us and put us in jail for any motive,” marijuana smoking being the most frequent cause.<sup>101</sup>

On the *bandoleros*’ and *nadaístas*’ “lips of fire”—as Barba Jacob once wrote—marijuana represented a rejection of the political, class, gender, and religious hierarchies on which the National Front was predicated.<sup>102</sup> The criminalization of marijuana producers, traders, and consumers in rural and urban areas of the Andean interior was a means of controlling the population of young people who refused to be part of the Catholic anticommunist nation birthed by La Violencia, at a moment when Colombia was entering a demographic transition and urbanization was accelerating.<sup>103</sup> Imposing order is precisely what Berta Hernández de Ospina advocated when she complained in 1966 about news of a marijuana confiscation in Bogotá. One of the National Front’s moral defenders, the former First Lady (wife of Mariano Ospina Pérez) feared that publicizing the market value of the pounds of intoxicant seized would entice “all our bums and idlers” to look for ways to make money with “a little plant that can be easily hidden, that grows anywhere, and that gives such good economic return.”<sup>104</sup> Apart from her dramatic tone, Doña Berta (as she was known) had a point. The specter of easy

money would more easily materialize in the pursuit of the promises of urbanization, upward mobility, and social recognition in an increasingly restrictive political and economic order in which these proved otherwise unobtainable. The rule of law was not enough, nor was any moral panic campaign stoked by the media, to prevent youth in search of a better future from responding to the demand for marijuana in the United States when conditions were ripe.

#### MARIJUANA SMUGGLING AND URBANIZATION

In 1969, just a couple of years into the boom in consumption of marijuana, the United States experienced “a marijuana famine.”<sup>105</sup> It resulted from the combined effects of summer droughts in Mexico, the main US supplier, and the first chapter of the “war on drugs” along the US-Mexican border.<sup>106</sup> At this time, Colombia was not a significant source of the drug, even though smugglers in at least five regions of the country included small amounts of marijuana—and occasionally cocaine and barbiturates—in their regular cargos of agricultural products, mainly coffee, that were exported to the United States via Panama or Aruba; and tourists also smuggled drugs concealed in their luggage, even from Bogotá’s international airport.<sup>107</sup> The Greater Magdalena was just one of the regions involved in this traffic, which authorities around the world attributed to the sharply upward climb in drug use among white middle-class North American youth.<sup>108</sup> In Mediterranean Europe, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Mexico, authorities reported young US men buying and selling marijuana and hashish in small quantities, exchanging it for LSD, and smuggling it in “large bulk shipments of drugs include [*sic*] concealment in transshipped vehicles and renegade pilots who fly drugs in small aircraft.”<sup>109</sup> Smugglers in the fracturing Greater Magdalena counted on a privileged geographic location in relation to consumption markets, a long history of contraband bolstered by governmental macroeconomic policies that stimulated coffee smuggling, and the discontent created by the National Front’s model of agrarian development, and readily participated in the trade.

These smugglers worked from two focal points that ultimately became terminals for two different routes: Riohacha and nearby seaports, and Santa Marta and its bay area. The pioneers in Riohacha and surrounding ports came from two intertwined but different sectors of Guajira’s *criollo* society.<sup>110</sup> Forest engineer Rodrigo Echeverri and his research team from the National

Institute of Natural Resources (Inderena) in the Sierra Nevada confirmed, in the most exhaustive study of the marijuana export sector produced during the boom: “The first group that began working with marijuana were smugglers of liquors, cigarettes, appliances, and coffee,” because “they had the know-how, the paraphernalia, and the personnel to export any kind of product illegally from the country.”<sup>111</sup> They took advantage of the physical isolation of the Guajira’s coastline and natural seaports to turn the profitable smuggling business of coffee and general goods toward trafficking in marijuana. A cliff known as Los Muchachitos, located on the coast between Santa Marta and Riohacha, posed a natural barrier to extension of the Troncal del Caribe, the paved road that linked the towns along the littoral. Isolated natural seaports located north of the cliff and near Dibulla and Riohacha, such as La Punta and El Pájaro, became ideal sites for smuggling small quantities of marijuana in the coffee shipments destined for the insular Caribbean.<sup>112</sup>

Among these pioneers were Chijo and his *compadre* Lucky. After many failed attempts over the years to get an interview with Lucky, whom I met at Chijo’s funeral in Riohacha, the information I collected on his career trajectory is limited to public knowledge and interviews I recorded with his brother and business partner, Mantequilla. Descendants of divi-divi smuggler Luis Cotes Gómez and his Wayuu wife, Lucila Barros, the brothers were members of Riohacha’s *criollo* elite and one of the wealthiest Wayuu clans of the upper peninsula. The rumor is that Lucky got his nickname from the Lucky Strike brand because he got his start in contraband with cigarettes. Then there was Chijo, another young man of Wayuu ancestry but of rural origins who belonged to a more modest family of merchants who traded in cattle and gold jewelry from their base in the village of Carraipía.<sup>113</sup> “One day, when I least expected it, a *compadre* gave me the opportunity to buy coffee,” Chijo said about his first deal as a *contrabandista*, recorded on one of the ten surviving tapes on which he narrated his life history.<sup>114</sup> During the last years of his life, Chijo made a tape-recorded journal in which he preserved some of his most cherished memories. According to Mantequilla, it was Lucky who gave Chijo a chance. The two met in school at Riohacha, where Chijo studied before moving to Santa Marta to attend the prestigious public high school of Liceo Celedón.<sup>115</sup>

Chijo provided no evidence in his recordings as to how the two translated their knowledge, experience, and wealth in the coffee business into smuggling marijuana. Likewise, Mantequilla adeptly avoided discussing many details about the marijuana business; whenever I asked about this, he either

made jokes or changed the subject. One thing is known, however: when Nacho Vives ran for Congress for the first time in 1962, as the candidate of the Intendencia de la Guajira, the local government in Riohacha was swamped in corruption scandals because of a renewed alliance between politicians and smugglers who were then mutually benefiting from the coffee contraband bonanza.<sup>116</sup> Callo, the coffee smuggler from Riohacha, learned first of the marijuana business around 1966. Only a few years later one of the dynasties of Liberal politicians who were involved in the corruption scandals hired him to drive a load of marijuana from their lands in La Punta, south of Riohacha, to a nearby airstrip.<sup>117</sup> In other words, at some point in the late 1960s smuggling marijuana along with coffee became a regular practice for a select group of smugglers who managed to secure buyers.

Smugglers reproduced the exact same circuit for marijuana that they used for coffee. They either transported it to seaports for exporters from the Andean interior or other parts of the coast, or bought small quantities locally in the banana district or in the black markets of Barranquilla and Santa Marta for their own ventures. In the former case, when the marijuana came from the Andean interior, they picked it up along with coffee freights in either Santa Marta or Valledupar, where the Troncal del Caribe and Troncal de Oriente ended, respectively.<sup>118</sup> Meco, a driver from San Juan del Cesar, assured me that during “the marijuana boom, we used the same trails, the same roads, the same paths [as with coffee]; there were also people who *mosqueaba* [drove “the fly”], the same law [enforcement].”<sup>119</sup> Journalist Enrique Herrera Barros from Riohacha recalled that during these early years “almost all the people who came from somewhere else had nicknames, nobody knew who was who, nobody knew their full names; it was said that they brought marijuana from Corinto [in the Department of Cauca, south of the sugar belt], because the marijuana from the Sierra Nevada was not known until years later.”<sup>120</sup> And, as with coffee contraband, marijuana smugglers were the final link in a long chain of intermediaries. In Callo’s disdainful words, “*Guajiros* were nothing, they were errand boys of the big shots [who] earned a commission, and thanks to this they got strong, and then they could send their own little cargos.”<sup>121</sup> By the late 1960s existing smuggling networks of coffee were engaged in some way in the modest smuggling of marijuana.

Further south, *turreros*, smugglers of products from merchant ships into Santa Marta and the bay area, changed the direction of the commercial flows outward to supply the young US buyers who arrived in the port as tourists or sailors searching for marijuana for personal consumption.<sup>122</sup> Like



*contrabandistas* in the Guajira, US consumers-cum-smugglers followed their own commercial traditions, which went back to the United Fruit Company's golden age, when the company's Great White Fleet passenger service regularly brought US tourists to Santa Marta attracted by the "mythmaking central to tourist industry publicity," promising results from modest investment.<sup>123</sup> And like US marijuana smugglers operating along the Mexican border, those who arrived in Santa Marta and the bay area refrained from moving large quantities, and learned through observation and from others' mistakes.<sup>124</sup> They were also quintessential hippies—predominantly white, "male, young, single."<sup>125</sup>

Juan "Ios" Vieira, an environmental activist from the coffee region who moved to the bay area in the late 1960s, told me at a café in downtown Santa Marta that when he arrived in the region, "there was *marimba* [marijuana], but there was no business." Having just come back from the United States after graduating from college there, he decided to settle in Taganga, a small fishing town north of Santa Marta, when "out of the blue, suspicious boats began to arrive; they brought LSD to exchange." Whenever local marijuana crops in the former banana district or supplies in Santa Marta's black market were insufficient in quantity or quality, visitors would travel to the Andean interior, and sometimes return to the bay area with the few pounds they had obtained and export them in their own sailboats. They "all looked like hippies, they were not big businessmen; they did not look for large quantities, but they were many, many," Vieira affirmed.<sup>126</sup> And with their arrival en masse, opportunities for marijuana connections multiplied. Backpackers, dropouts, and runaways, the young US men who engaged in this trafficking during the late 1960s were regular smokers who embarked on the adventure of supplying themselves and friends in order to finance their itinerant lifestyles.<sup>127</sup> Smuggling was the flip side of the new habit of smoking marijuana, a distinct aspect of a new youth culture that valued irreverence, risk taking, self-sufficiency, and independence.

The Colombian rural and urban youth who supplied US buyers were not that different. Most young men in the disintegrated Greater Magdalena lived in limbo between the countryside and the city, where they received low-quality public education and were unemployed, participated in petty commerce, or worked menial jobs. The expansion of the educational system that started with the Liberal Republic in the 1930s did not keep up with the country's rapid urbanization and demographic transition during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>128</sup> Despite successfully implementing the French model of *liceos* (pub-

lic high schools), the Colombian educational system had great deficiencies.<sup>129</sup> And in the Greater Magdalena, these inadequacies proved stubborn to those who wished to address them. Congressman Nacho Vives reported in 1965, while defending the bill to upgrade the Intendencia de la Guajira to a department, that “the Guajira does not have educational services sufficient to offer the young population job training [to] prepare them in the near future to perform profitable labor.”<sup>130</sup> Public schools were substandard, and for those who did not have relatives in town, living conditions in dormitories or *pen-siones* (private boardinghouses) were deplorable or expensive. Vallenato composer Rafael Escalona complained about the pitiful situation he faced in Santa Marta’s Liceo Celedón (which Chijo would attend decades later) in the song “El hambre del liceo” (High School’s Hunger):

With that news they went to my mom,  
that as thin as I was, I looked like a noodle,  
and it is the hunger experienced in the *liceo*  
that prevents me from gaining weight.<sup>131</sup>

To poor young men accustomed to working on farms and in fields or to living on the streets since childhood, school represented a kind of miserable confinement that required obedience. Martín López, an educational scholar, told me at his house in Riohacha that those who dropped out of school and “devoted themselves from an early age to work and other things, the so-called slackers,” were the ones who made money with marijuana.<sup>132</sup> “They studied in the ‘school of life,’” López elaborated in his master’s thesis in social psychology; “they learned early how to drive, were exceptional at billiards, skillful in trades, and the first to jump with no fear from the bridge to the river or from the pier to the sea.”<sup>133</sup> Chijo recalled his own ups and downs in life, which he attributed to the fact that he “was a mischievous kid,” one who “liked to ride animals, go to the river to catch fish, catch wild cattle without permission, fall in love and get home late.”<sup>134</sup> The youth who got involved in smuggling marijuana were the children of the “educational breach” in the 1950s and 1960s that separated the generation trained in their family’s craft from the one formally—albeit poorly—educated by public institutions and in the “school of life.”<sup>135</sup>

Being poor and precariously educated proved advantageous for the new business. Young rural and urban men’s wandering and hustling, their inclination to physical work rather than intellectual labor, their audacity and bravado, yielded good results in the new circumstances. The career of Lucho

Barranquilla, a pioneer of the marijuana business in Santa Marta, illustrates how improvisation, innovation, and irreverence were tools necessary to surviving the fracturing of the agrarian world in which this generation had been born and the rapid urbanization that followed.<sup>136</sup> Named Luis Pérez Quesada, Barranquilla was from a town not far from the city where he got his nickname.<sup>137</sup> According to Silvio, a childhood friend of Barranquilla who became a sailor for coffee and marijuana smugglers, Barranquilla was a *gamin* (street kid) who after wandering around Riohacha and Maicao performing menial jobs, settled in Santa Marta.<sup>138</sup> Years passed and Silvio never saw him until he heard rumors of his sudden wealth and visited him in Santa Marta. Barranquilla told Silvio that he was in the *turreros* market on 11th Street when a group of sailors from Puerto Rico asked him where they could get five hundred pounds of marijuana. “Because all his life he had been shrewd, he got them that marijuana,” Silvio said. Satisfied with how Barranquilla handled the deal, the sailors sent their contacts directly to him, “and more people, and more people, and suddenly Barranquilla had many clients.”<sup>139</sup> Years later, Barranquilla confessed to a journalist that he used captains and crews of the Flota Mercante Grancolombiana—the fleet that transported Fedecafé’s coffee to the world—to send marijuana to the United States concealed in coffee sacks. Barranquilla was tall and robust, and functionally illiterate. He was an aggressive merchant but “kind in the extreme, charitable, with a big heart,” a patron of the destitute classes. When a competitor killed him in January 1976, the press reported that he was mourned by the “dispossessed who received help from his hands, the policemen who received his bribes because their salaries were insufficient, and the kids from the neighborhood of Las Delicias who played every afternoon in the park he built as a *criollo* Robin Hood.”<sup>140</sup> Writer Eduardo Galeano recounts in his poetic fictionalized chronicle of twentieth-century Latin America, *Century of the Wind*, how Barranquilla’s murderers “sent to the funeral a floral wreath in the form of a heart and took up a collection to erect a statute of the departed in the main plaza.”<sup>141</sup>

Whether Silvio’s testimony is a truthful rendition of their conversation, or even whether that conversation actually happened, is irrelevant for my purposes here. The story is meaningful because of its powerful tropes about the uncertain origins of the marijuana trade’s pioneers.<sup>142</sup> The rags-to-riches narrative of Barranquilla’s life—his humble upbringing, uprooted childhood, vagrant life, menial jobs, followed by a stroke of luck leading to rapid success, a penchant for generosity, and, ultimately, a tragic death—circulates

as folklore and explains why so many young men seized the opportunity to work in the marijuana business.

Chijo's trajectory contains some of the same tropes but in more nuanced ways, revealing an epistemological and heuristic problem in the scholarly study of smugglers and illegal commerce. Thanks to his higher level of education, Chijo gained a certain degree of control over his life's narrative when he decided to record his memoirs in the hope of publishing a book. One of his nephews told me in a cafeteria in Riohacha that the purpose of Chijo's project was to celebrate relatives and *compadres* rather than to produce an autobiography.<sup>143</sup> After weeks of living with Chijo's voice in my head as I transcribed the tapes, I learned that his project was even more complex and ambitious than his nephew knew. Although Chijo was undoubtedly trying to show his love for his homeland and the people who gave meaning to his existence, he was also seeking to set the record straight and reveal the most intimate truths about his life's ups and downs. One of Chijo's sisters, who helped me obtain the tapes and the family's permission to transcribe them and use their content, thought that one of the broken cassettes contained his memories of the marijuana years. In any case, in the surviving recordings Chijo never addressed in detail the period of his fame and fortune, which is curious, to say the least.

Lacking any evidence to explain this omission, I can confirm that Chijo's story is one of a daring young man engaged in a protracted struggle to assert himself. He told us that "trying to broaden my horizons," he dropped out of Liceo Celedón in Santa Marta and traveled to Barranquilla to join the Junior soccer club. Nicknamed El Burro (the Donkey) for the strength of his legs, Chijo was nevertheless rejected from the club. Frustrated, he spent his monthly allowance on a trip to Medellín, where he went to the Atlético Nacional soccer club. He got the attention of the coaches, and after several practices he signed a contract for the junior leagues. When he learned that one of his uncles had died, Chijo returned home and asked his father for forgiveness for having dropped out of the *liceo*, and joined the family in the funerary rites. Soon thereafter, one of his brothers was hurt in a fight and Chijo embarked on a mission to restore his family's honor. Again estranged from his father and other relatives, Chijo saw "years [pass,] and the most horrible thing happened: papa was killed, and everything was over." Chijo did not explain the cause or context of the homicide. Clearly, however, from this point he became "a different man; it began the endless swings of my life, full of restlessness, sadness, and pain."<sup>144</sup>

Although the first swing in Chijo's life came with joy. Thanks to Lucky, one of his friends from school in Riohacha, Chijo got involved in coffee contraband. By then, he had run into an old friend in Maicao, stayed at his house, fell in love with one of his sisters, married her, and straightened himself up. For his first coffee deal, he recalled, he went to Caracolí, Urumita, and Codazzi, three towns in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, Perijá, and the great valley, respectively, to buy harvests with the money his *compadre* advanced him. After paying Lucky back, he continued buying coffee for his partner to export to Aruba. He became familiar with cultivation sites, Fedecafé's agencies, and smuggling practices, and he quickly amassed a small fortune.<sup>145</sup> By trading in coffee, Chijo forged ties with Lucky and Riohacha's contraband elite and began a new life as a successful merchant.

The peripatetic lives of Chijo and Barranquilla demonstrate how important personal autonomy, self-sufficiency, and risk taking were for the young men who embraced the new opportunity. Building on routes, procedures, values, and codes established by a slightly older generation that thrived with the coffee contraband, the earliest marijuana traffickers combined both activities. Germán Rojas, a journalist from Riohacha who worked as a correspondent for national and regional newspapers during the marijuana boom, told me on the sidewalk by his office in Riohacha while we watched the sun set that "it had not been told, it had not been discovered that there was a great number of people transporting, selling marijuana; they worked in secrecy."<sup>146</sup> During this initial stage, disparate networks responded sporadically to the demand of specific buyers with manageable supplies of marijuana. In a region where the smuggling of the valuable coffee bean and general merchandise was frequent, profitable, and voluminous, and where there were no *bandolero* or *nadaísta* movements to fear and suppress, authorities did not bother to enforce the anti-marijuana laws as they did in the Andean interior. Young men involved with these counterhegemonic economic practices had open space in which to innovate, improvise, and experiment with old patterns of commerce while establishing the foundations of a completely new export sector. Between indifference on the part of local authorities and acceptance of smuggling on the part of society, marijuana traffic rooted.

While the Lleras Restrepo administration (1966–70) gradually abandoned the agrarian reform and its promises of redistribution and development in order to close ranks with regional elites and protect their socioeconomic

interests and the National Front's status quo, smugglers responded with a series of counterhegemonic commercial practices to protect their livelihoods. The "juridical pluralism" of the Guajira (a result of its demographic diversity and juxtaposition of various ethical and judicial systems), its open doors vis-à-vis Caribbean islands, and the direct connection between Santa Marta bay and the United States (after decades of banana exportation and tourism) created apertures in which coffee and marijuana smuggling thrived as socially sanctioned practices.<sup>147</sup> In a regional economy transitioning from bananas to cotton, where land and wealth concentrated at the top of society, the cultivation and smuggling of coffee and marijuana became outlets that released the pressure of accumulated social conflicts in the agricultural frontiers and growing urban peripheries. Young men from the elite and lower classes in Riohacha and the Guajira, and in Santa Marta and the bay area, joined the new business in different capacities. The synergy between these sellers and the US buyers infused the new activity with a characteristic dynamism. "Youth was the carrier of sociocultural modernization *and* its discontents," historian Valeria Manzano reminds us in the case of 1960 Argentina.<sup>148</sup> But in contrast to the case Manzano studies, and many others in Latin America, in which dissatisfaction was expressed through cultural rebellion and political radicalization, in the former Greater Magdalena, discontent manifested as a reactivation of the old in pursuit of the new as younger smugglers revitalized the connections, knowledge, and wealth acquired through smuggling coffee and general merchandise in order to participate in a novel business that would shake the region to its core. In a matter of years, by the early 1970s, the rising demand for marijuana in the United States prompted rapid growth in the volume and frequency of this trade in the former Greater Magdalena. Marijuana smugglers from both sides of the supply-and-demand equation set forth audaciously to transform an incipient contraband business into a robust agricultural export sector, one that reproduced many of the production and commercial patterns established in previous booms in a region where people were used to experimenting with tropical commodities for export in pursuit of agrarian development.



## NOTES

### ABBREVIATIONS

AGN	Archivo General de la Nación (National General Archive)
ANIF	Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras (National Association of Financial Institutions)
ANUC	Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (National Peasant Association)
DAS	Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (Administrative Department of Security)
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Administration
Inderena	Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales (National Institute of Natural Resources)
Incora	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (National Institute of Agrarian Reform)
JCPL	Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
RG	Record Group
SCNAC	US House of Representatives, Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control
Unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



## INTRODUCTION

1. For a summary of these academic and political debates, see Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras (ANIF), *Marihuana: Legalización o represión* (Bogotá: Biblioteca ANIF de Economía, 1979); and Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras ANIF, *La legalización de la marihuana* (Bogotá: Serie Estudios ANIF, 1980). For a summary of mass-media discourses, see José Cervantes Angulo, *La noche de las luciérnagas* (Bogotá: Plaza y Janés, 1980).
2. Margarita Serje, "El mito de la ausencia del Estado: La incorporación económica de las 'zonas de frontera' en Colombia," *Cahiers des Ameriques Latines* 71 (2012): 95–117.
3. Paul Gootenberg and Isaac Campos, "Toward a New Drug History of Latin America: A Research Frontier at the Center of Debates," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (February 2015): 16.
4. Alfredo Iriarte, "Prefacio," in Eduardo Zalamea Borda, *Cuatro años a bordo de mi mismo: Diario de los cinco sentidos* (1934; reprint, Medellín: Editorial Bedout, 1982), 5.
5. Zalamea Borda, *Cuatro años a bordo de mi mismo*, 18, 22 (translation by the author).
6. Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez Ruíz, "Deconstrucción de códigos modernos: *Cuatro años a bordo de mí mismo*," *Universitas Humanistica* 53, no. 53 (2002): 49–61. See also J. Eduardo Jaramillo Zuluaga, "4 años a bordo de mí mismo: Una poética de los sentidos," in *El mausoleo iluminado: Antología del ensayo en Colombia*, ed. Óscar Torres Duque (Bogotá: Presidencia de la República, 1997).
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19. Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, “Historia del poblamiento del territorio de la región Caribe de Colombia,” in *Poblamiento y ciudades del Caribe colombiano*, ed. Alberto Abello Vives and Silvana Giaimo Chávez (Bogotá: Observatorio del Caribe Colombiano, Editorial Gente Nueva, 2000), 21.

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Jaramillo Uribe, "Nación y región en los orígenes del Estado nacional en Colombia," in *Ensayos de historia social, temas americanos y otros ensayos*, vol. 2 (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, Ediciones Uniandes, 1989); David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Joanne Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). On the coffee republic, see Charles Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986); Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875–2002* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). On processes of regionalization in the nineteenth-century Caribbean coast, see Jorge Conde Calderón, "Identidades políticas y grupos de poder en el Caribe colombiano, 1828–1848," in *Historia, identidades, cultura popular y música tradicional en el Caribe colombiano*, ed. Hugues R. Sánchez and Leovedis Martínez (Valledupar, Colombia: Ediciones Unicesar, 2004); and Eduardo Posada Carbó, "Progreso y estancamiento, 1850–1950," in *Historia económica y social del Caribe colombiano*, ed. Nicolás del Castillo Mathieu et al. (Barranquilla, Colombia: Ediciones Uninorte and ECOE Ediciones, 1994).

23. Serje, *El revés de la nación*.

24. Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); and Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 174.

25. Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 17.

26. On US interests in Colombia, see Stephen Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992).

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Uniandes, 1990); and Juan G. Tokatlian and Bruce Bagley, eds., *Economía y política del narcotráfico* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 1990). For perspectives from below, see Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, Leonidas Mora, and Fernando Cubides, *Colonización, coca y guerrilla* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1986); Alfredo Molano Bravo, *Selva adentro: Una historia oral de la colonización del Guaviare* (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1987); Molano Bravo, *Aguas arriba: Entre la coca y el oro* (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1990); Alonso Salazar, *No nacimos pa semilla* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1990); Mario Arango, *El impacto del narcotráfico en Antioquia* (Medellín: J. M. Arango, 1988); and Víctor Gaviria, *El pelaito que no duró nada* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 1991).

29. For a pioneering work along this line of interpretation, see Francisco Thoumi, *Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 265–97. See also Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, “La prehistoria del narcotráfico en Colombia,” *Innovar* 8 (1996): 65–92; and Mary Roldán, “Cocaine and the ‘Miracle’ of Modernity in Medellín,” in *Cocaine: Global Histories*, ed. Paul Gootenberg (London: Routledge, 1999).

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31. For some examples of this literature, see Alonso Salazar, *La cola del lagarto: Drogas y narcotráfico en la sociedad colombiana* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 1998); Francisco Thoumi, *Economía política y narcotráfico* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1994); Salomón Kalmanovitz, Ricardo Vargas, and Camilo Borrero, eds., *Drogas, poder y región en Colombia* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1994); Francisco Thoumi et al., eds., *Drogas ilícitas en Colombia. Su impacto económico, político y social* (Bogotá: Editorial Ariel, 1997).

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33. Vladimir Daza Villar, *La Guajira: El tortuoso camino a la legalidad* (Bogotá: Naciones Unidas, 2003); Santiago González Plazas, *Pasado y presente del contrabando en la Guajira: Aproximaciones al fenómeno de ilegalidad en la región* (Bogotá: Centro de Estudios y Observatorio de Drogas y Delitos, Facultad de Economía, Universidad del Rosario, 2008).

34. Giangina Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando: Nociones de legalidad y legitimidad en la frontera guajira, siglo XX* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 2007); Anne Marie Losonczy, “De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas,” in *Afrodendientes en las Américas. Trayectorias sociales e identitarias*, ed. Claudia Mosquera, Mauricio Pardo, and Odile Hoffmann (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia e Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2002), 235–36.

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39. Forrest Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia* (London: Verso, 2006), 9. For discussion of Colombia in the Andean context, see Brooke Larson, *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810–1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For a synthesis, see John Coatsworth, “The Roots of Violence in Colombia,” *ReVista: Harvard Report on the Americas* 2, no. 3 (spring 2003): 8–12.

40. On the notion of a “nation in spite of itself,” see Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*. On the region as the “patria chica,” see Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, *Colombia, país de regiones* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1998); Juan Guillermo Restrepo Arteaga, *El Caribe colombiano: Aproximación a la región y el regionalismo* (Barranquilla, Colombia: Universidad del Norte, 2000); Jaime Vidal Perdomo, *La región en la organización territorial del Estado* (Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2001); Carmén Adriana Ferreira, *Región, historia y cultura* (Bucaramanga, Colombia: Universidad Industrial de Santander, 2003); and Gustavo Bell Lemus, ed., *La región y sus orígenes: Momentos de la historia económica y política del Caribe colombiano* (Bogotá: Maremagnum, 2007).

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42. Itty Abraham and Willem van Schendel call for spatially and temporally rescaling the analysis of “international crime” in “Introduction: The Making of

Illicitness,” in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, ed. Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

43. Steve Stern, “The Decentered Center and the Expansionist Periphery: The Paradoxes of Foreign-Local Encounter,” in Joseph, LeGrand, and Salvatore, *Close Encounters of Empire*.

44. For academic works on women’s role in the drug trade, see Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 245–90; Elaine Carey, *Women Drug Traffickers: Mules, Bosses, and Organized Crime* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014); and Jennifer Fleetwood, *Drug Mules: Women in the International Cocaine Trade* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). For nonfiction and fiction literature, see, for example, Arturo Pérez Reverte, *La Reina del Sur* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2002); and Jorge Franco, *Rosario Tijeras* (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 1999). For documentary and feature films, see, for example, *Maria Full of Grace* (Joshua Marston, dir.; 2004) and *Cocaine Cowboys* (Billy Corben, dir.; 2006).

45. On the war between paramilitary commanders, search on “Hernán Giraldo” and “Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias Jorge 40,” in [www.verdadabierta.com](http://www.verdadabierta.com).

46. Fictive kinship, such as *compadrazgo*, binds people together through mutual rights and obligations in many parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Anthropologists have traced this custom to colonial times, and have even found pre-conquest analogues; see Daniel Balderstone, Mike Gonzalez, and Ana M. López, eds., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Harry Sanabria, *The Anthropology of Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pearson Education, 2007). On Uncle Arique as a renowned storyteller and civic leader, see “Rafael Enrique Brito Molina, ‘Arique,’ un símbolo del civismo sanjuanero,” *Diario del Norte* (March 14, 2017), 10–11.

47. The massacre of Bahía Portete took place on April 18, 2004. See Informe del Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *La masacre de Bahía Portete: Mujeres Wayuu en la mira* (Bogotá: Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación, Taurus Editores, 2010).

48. Luis Alejandro Astorga, *Mitología del narcotraficante en México* (México, DF: Plaza y Valdés, 1995), 12–13.

49. Roseberry, *Anthropologies and Histories*, 147.

50. On the impact of hurricanes in colonial Guajira, see Weidler Guerra Curvelo, “Riohacha: Ciudad inconclusa,” in Abello Vives and Gaiimo Chávez, *Poblamiento y ciudades del Caribe colombiano*. On hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean, see Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean, from Columbus to Katrina* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

51. Here I take inspiration from Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).

52. From 1953 to 1979 hurricanes had only female names; see “Tropical Cyclone Naming,” World Meteorological Organization, available at, <https://public.wmo.int/en/About-us/FAQs/faqs-tropical-cyclones/tropical-cyclone-naming>.

53. Alex Halperin, "Marijuana: Is It Time to Stop Using a Word with Racist Roots?" *The Guardian*, January 29, 2018.
54. Nicolás del Castillo Mathieu, "El léxico negro-africano de San Basilio de Palenque," *Thesaurus* 39, nos. 1-3 (1984): 143. See also Andrés López Restrepo, "El control del cannabis: De las políticas nacionales al régimen global" (forthcoming).
55. Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 2003).
56. For "tropical gaze," see Jefferson Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise: Landscape and Empire in the British West Indies* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 3.
57. For marijuana as the "forbidden plant," see Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 178.
58. For Liberalism and Conservatism in Colombia as doctrines of the Liberal and Conservative Parties, see Gerardo Molina, *Las ideas liberales en Colombia*, Vol. 2, 1915-1934 (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1974); and Javier Ocampo López, *Qué es el conservatismo colombiano* (Bogotá: Plaza y Janés, 1990).

#### CHAPTER I. WHEELS OF PROGRESS

1. Joaquín Viloria de la Hoz, *Café Caribe: La economía cafetera en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*, Documentos de trabajo sobre economía regional (Cartagena de Indias: Centro de investigaciones económicas del Caribe colombiano, Banco de la República, 1997), 3, 6-7.
2. Judith White, *Historia de una ignominia: La United Fruit Co. en Colombia* (Bogotá: Editorial Presencia, 1978), 15.
3. Joaquín Viloria de la Hoz, "Historia empresarial del guineo: Empresas y empresarios bananeros en el departamento del Magdalena, 1870-1930," *Cuadernos de historia económica y empresarial* 23, 45.
4. Joaquín Viloria de la Hoz, *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: Economía de sus recursos naturales*, Documentos de trabajo sobre economía regional (Cartagena de Indias: Centro de Estudios Económicos Regionales, Banco de la República, 2005), 39-40.
5. José Benito Vives, *Pepe Vives cuenta su vida* (Santa Marta, Colombia: Editorial Mejoras, 1981), 57-67.
6. William Roseberry, "Introduction," in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*, ed. William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper Kutschbach (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4-8.
7. Viloria de la Hoz, "Historia empresarial del guineo," 8-15; Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 151.
8. Salomón Kalmanovitz and Enrique López Enciso, *La agricultura colombiana en el siglo XX* (Bogotá: Fondo de Cultura Económica y Banco de la República, 2006), 79; Michael F. Jiménez, "At the Banquet of Civilization: The Limits of Planter Hegemony in Early-Twentieth-Century Colombia," in Roseberry, Gudmundson and Kutschbach, eds., *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*.



in *Los movimientos populares en América Latina*, eds. Daniel Camacho and Rafael Menjívar (Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores 1989), 160.

215. Moberg and Striffler, "Introduction," 3–4; Topik and Wells, "Introduction," 16.

## CHAPTER 2. COMING FROM THE MOUNTAIN

1. This paragraph is based on Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author, February 23, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira, Colombia; Rafael Enrique "Arique" Britto, interview by the author, no. 2, February 23, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira, Colombia; Rafael Enrique "Arique" Britto, interview by the author, no. 3, February 24, 2005, on road Villanueva–San Juan del Cesar, Guajira, Colombia; Daza Noguera, interview by the author; and Rafael Enrique "Arique" Britto, interview by the author, no. 4, December 5, 2014, on road La Junta–San Juan del Cesar, Guajira, Colombia. On the use of trucks in the smuggling business, see González Plazas, *Pasado y presente del contrabando en la Guajira*, 53.

2. On the "long sixties," see Tamara Chaplin and Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney, "Introduction," in *The Global 60s: Convention, Contest, and Counterculture*, ed. Tamara Chaplin and Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2–4; and Martin Klimke and Mary Nolan, "Introduction: The Globalization of the Sixties," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building*, ed. Chen Jian, Martin Klimke, Masha Kirasirova, Mary Nolan, Marilyn Young, and Joanna Waley-Cohen (New York: Routledge, 2018), 4–5.

3. For the case for expanding the narrow notion of the "political" in the study of the "global sixties," see Vania Markarian, "To the Beat of 'The Walrus': Uruguayan Communists and Youth Culture in the Global Sixties," *The Americas* 70, no. 3 (January 2014): 363–92.

4. On youth and generation as main markers of identity, see Patrick Barr-Melej, *Psychedelic Chile: Youth, Counterculture, and Politics on the Road to Socialism and Dictatorship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 5–6.

5. On the "global sixties" as a heuristic tool for understanding local change within a transnational framework, see Eric Zolov, "Introduction: Latin America in the Global Sixties," *The Americas* 70, no. 3 (January 2014): 349–62.

6. On 1946 to 1953 as the bloodiest phase of La Violencia, see Germán Gustavo Guzmán, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña, *La Violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un proceso social* (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1963).

7. On labor in the cotton belt, see Partridge, "Banana County in the Wake of United Fruit," 494; Bernal Castillo, *Crisis algodonera y violencia en el departamento del Cesar*, 33–34; Wagner Medina, "Las huellas ambientales del oro blanco," 37–38. By 1953 the United Fruit Company had sold out to private owners and turned over to the government seven thousand hectares of irrigated lands; by 1965 it concluded its withdrawal. See Bucheli, *Empresas multinacionales y enclaves agrícolas*, 29–30; and Partridge, "Banana Country in the Wake of United Fruit," 497.

8. Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 42.
9. Alfredo Molano, Fernando Rozo, Juana Escobar, and Omayra Mendiola, "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Área Social: Aproximación a una historia oral de la colonización de la SNSM, Recuento analítico (Agosto 1988)," Documento de Trabajo (unpublished manuscript), Fundación ProSierra Nevada de Santa Marta, 93.
10. Vilorio de la Hoz, *Café Caribe*, 29.
11. Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 131.
12. Luisa Fernanda Herrera de Turbay, "La actividad agrícola en la SNSM (Colombia): Perspectiva histórica," in *Studies on Tropical Andean Ecosystems/Estudios de ecosistemas Tropaandinos*, vol. 2: *La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*, ed. Thomas Van Der Hammen and Pedro M. Ruiz (Berlin: J. Cramer, 1986), 501–2. See also Gene Logsdon, "The Importance of Traditional Farming Practices for a Sustainable Modern Agriculture," in *Meeting the Expectations of the Land: Essays in Sustainable Agriculture and Stewardship*, ed. Wes Jackson, Wendell Berry, and Bruce Colman (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 7.
13. Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 4.
14. In the original Spanish: "Vengo de la montaña / de allá de la cordillera, / allá déjé mi compañera / junto con mis dos hijitos. / Yo me traje bien cargado mi burrito, / vendo mi carga y me alisto / porque mi mujer me espera. / Tengo pensado regresar me muy temprano / porque ella me está esperando con algunos alimentos, / mi pobre compañera que con tanto sufrimiento, / amargas y tormentos me acompaña en esas tierras." Máximo Movil, "Mujer conforme," in Jorge Oñate, *La parranda y la mujer*, 1975.
15. Kalmanovitz and López Enciso, *La agricultura colombiana en el siglo XX*, 83. See also Margarita Jiménez and Sandro Sideri, *Historia del desarrollo regional en Colombia* (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1985), 112.
16. Sáenz Rovner, *La ofensiva empresarial*, 189–202. See also Francisco Rodríguez Vargas, "Las organizaciones del sector cafetero colombiano," *Innovar* 7 (1996): 7–26.
17. Sáenz Rovner, *La ofensiva empresarial*, 212.
18. On the plunder of coffee farms, see Carlos Miguel Ortiz Sarmiento, *Estado y subversión en Colombia: La Violencia en el Quindío, años 50* (Bogotá: CIDER-Uniandes; Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1985), 294–99. See also Robert A. Karl, *Forgotten Peace: Reform, Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 98; and Mariano Arango, *El café en Colombia, 1930–1958: Producción, circulación y política* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1982), 252–56.
19. Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 328.

20. The other area involved was the Andean department of Norte de Santander, bordering Venezuela; see Comité Nacional de Cafeteros, “El contrabando de café: Comunicado de la Secretaría del Comité Nacional de Cafeteros, Diciembre 14 de 1956,” *Revista Cafetera de Colombia* 13, no. 130 (January 1957): 62. See also Iván Cadavid Orozco and Hugo Molina Muñoz, *El delito de contrabando* (Bogotá: Editorial Súper, 1979), 73–74.

21. Viloría de la Hoz, *Café Caribe*, 18.

22. On contraband as a creation of the state, see Peter Andreas, *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

23. James D. Henderson, *Las ideas de Laureano Gómez* (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1985), 54, 255; Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 212–13.

24. Jorge Dangond Castro, *Tierra nuestra: Crónicas de frontera* (Barranquilla, Colombia: Editorial Antillas, 2001), 38. See also Margarita Serje, “El ‘Almirante Padilla’ en Corea: Una crónica del legendario buque de la Armada Nacional de Colombia,” *Expedición Padilla*, May 2012, available at [https://www.academia.edu/3792656/El\\_Almirante\\_Padilla\\_en\\_Corea\\_Una\\_crónica\\_del\\_legendario\\_buque\\_de\\_la\\_Armada\\_Nacional\\_de\\_Colombia](https://www.academia.edu/3792656/El_Almirante_Padilla_en_Corea_Una_crónica_del_legendario_buque_de_la_Armada_Nacional_de_Colombia).

25. Fredy González Zubiría, *Crónicas del cancionero vallenato* (Riohacha, Colombia: Dirección Departamental de Cultura de la Guajira, 2011), 14; Abel Medina Sierra, “Escalona y su aventura en La Guajira,” *Aguaita* 21 (December 2009): 112; Héctor Castillo Castro, “Música de acordeón, frontera y contrabando en La Guajira, 1960–1980,” *Educación y Ciencia* 10 (2007): 73–88.

26. In the original Spanish: “Allá en La Guajira arriba, / donde nace el contrabando, / el Almirante Padilla llegó a Puerto López / y lo dejó arruinado . . . / barco pirate bandido, / que Santo Tomás lo vea, / prometí hacerle una fiesta / cuando un submarino lo voltee en Corea.” Rafael Escalona, “El almirante Padilla,” in Bovea y sus Vallenatos, *Los cantos vallenatos de Escalona*, 1962.

27. “Pobre Tite, pobre Tite / pobre Tite Socarrás / ahora se encuentra muy triste / lo ha perdido todo por contrabandear.” Escalona, “El almirante Padilla.”

28. Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando*, 99.

29. Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *Colombia años 50: Industriales, política y diplomacia* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002), 137–48; and Robert Karl, “From ‘Showcase’ to ‘Failure’: Democracy and the Colombian Developmental State in the 1960s,” in *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: The Rise and Fall of the Developmental State*, ed. Miguel A. Centeno and Agustín E. Ferraro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 73–104.

30. Comité Nacional de Cafeteros, “El contrabando de café,” 59–60; Arango, *El café en Colombia*, 260.

31. Roberto Junguito and Carlos Caballero, “La otra economía,” *Coyuntura Económica* 8, no. 4 (1978): 124.

32. Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando*, 98.

33. Callo, interview by the author, March 18, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia. I have also drawn on the following sources: Enrique Herrera Barros (journalist),

interview by the author, February 8, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia; Yim Daza Noguera, interview by the author; Edgar Ferrucho Padilla (journalist and former mayor of Maicao), interview by the author, no. 1, February 16, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia.

34. Yim Daza Noguera, interview by the author.
35. Chijo, "recordings," family archive, n.d. (hereafter "Chijo's recordings"), tape 4, side B; and Arique Britto, interview by the author, no. 3.
36. Raúl, interview by the author, March 16, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira.
37. Silvio, interview by the author, March 15, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira.
38. Araújo Noguera, "Rafael Escalona, el hombre y el mito," 279.
39. Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author.
40. Raúl, interview by the author.
41. On coffee consumption, see Michael Jiménez, "From Plantation to Cup: Coffee and Capitalism in the United States, 1830–1930," in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*, ed. William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper Kutschbach (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 38–63.
42. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 24.
43. Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando*, 97; Losonczy, "De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas," 235–36.
44. Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author.
45. Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author.
46. González Plazas, *Pasado y presente del contrabando en La Guajira*, 53.
47. Rafael Enrique "Arique" Britto, interview by the author, no. 1, January 16, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira, Colombia.
48. Arique Britto, interview by the author, no. 2. Here are the song's lyrics: "Ahí viene la perra / que me iba mordiendo, / perra valiente / que mordió a su dueño." Alejo Durán, "La perra," in Alejo Durán, *Lo Mejor de Alejo Durán*, n.d. For more on this song, see Bernardo A. Ciro Gómez, "'Murió don Heriberto y los tambores y los cantos cesaron': Una aproximación a la tambora en el contexto de las políticas culturales de la Revolución en Marcha en Colombia, 1930–1946," *Trashumante. Revista Americana de Historia Social* 14 (2019): 156.
49. On smugglers as aspirational figures, see Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando*, 101.
50. On Juya and Pulowi, see Michel Perrin, *The Way of the Dead Indians: Guajiro Myths and Symbols* (1976; reprint, Austin: University of Texas, 1987), 83–84. On "counter-acculturation" in the Guajira, see Acosta Medina, "El hombre guajiro," 73.
51. On "la mosca," see "Intelligence Report No. 4 on Coffee Contraband in Colombia by National Customs, Special Investigations Division," October 28, 1975, in AGN, Min. Interior, Sec. Gen., box 85, folder 3, folio 139.
52. Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author.
53. Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando*, 102–3.

54. Diana Bocarejo, "Thinking with (Il)legality: The Ethics of Living with Bonanzas," *Current Anthropology* 59, no. 18 (April 2018): 49.
55. Here I take inspiration from a similar argument that Charles Bergquist makes about coffee growers in the *eje cafetero*, in *Labor in Latin America*, 324–25.
56. For the Wayuu code of honor see Wilder Guerra Curvelo, *La disputa y la palabra: La ley en la Sociedad Wayuu* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2001).
57. Losonczy, "De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas," 238.
58. Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 140.
59. Arique Britto, interview by the author, no. 2.
60. Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author; Arique Britto, interview by the author, no. 2.
61. Arique Britto, interview by the author, no. 3.
62. Justiniano Mendoza, interview by the author; Arique Britto, interview by the author, no. 3; Daza Noguera, interview by the author.
63. Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 31–32.
64. Acosta Medina, "El hombre guajiro," 74.
65. Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 9.
66. Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 9; Losonczy, "De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas," 237.
67. Losonczy, "De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas," 232.
68. Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 18.
69. Jorge Alejandro González Cuello, *Aquel Corral de Piedras: Un legado de la humanidad* (Bogotá: Editorial Carrera 7a, Ltda., 2003).
70. Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria del narcotráfico en Colombia."
71. John Charles Chasteen, *Getting High: Marijuana through the Ages* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 59.
72. Vera Rubin and Lambros Comitas, *Ganja in Jamaica: A Medical Anthropological Study of Chronic Marijuana Use* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975).
73. All quotations from Pebo, interview by the author, June 25, 2006, Taganga, Magdalena, Colombia.
74. William Partridge, "Exchange Relations in a Community on the North Coast of Colombia, with Special Reference to Cannabis" (PhD dissertation, University of Florida, 1974), 42–43; Molano et al., "Diagnóstico de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Descripción testimonial," 5; Augusto Pérez Gómez, ed., *Sustancias psicoativas: Historia del consumo en Colombia*, 2nd ed. (1988; reprint, Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1994), 47.
75. Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria de la marihuana en Colombia," 212–15.
76. Arango and Child, *Narcotráfico*, 75; Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria de la marihuana en Colombia."

77. Fernando Vallejo, *Barba Jacob el mensajero* (México, DF: Editorial Séptimo Círculo, 1984), 68.
78. Manuel Mejía Vallejo, *El hombre que parecía un fantasma* (Medellín: Biblioteca Pública Piloto, 1984).
79. María Mercedes Carranza, "Porfirio Barba Jacob: El hombre que parecía un caballo," *El País*, March 9, 2002.
80. On "La dama de los cabellos ardientes," see Porfirio Barba Jacob, *Poesía completa* (Bogotá: Arango Editores, El Áncora Editores, 1988).
81. Vallejo, *Barba Jacob el mensajero*, 125.
82. Arango and Child, *Narcotráfico*, 81.
83. On the Geneva Convention of 1925, see William C. Plouffe Jr., "1925 Geneva Convention on Opium and Other Drugs," in *Encyclopedia of Drug Policy*, ed. Mark A. Kleiman and James E. Hawdon (Washington DC: Sage, 2011); and on the Geneva Convention of 1931, see Quincy Wright, "The Narcotics Convention of 1931," *American Journal of International Law* 28, no. 3 (July 1934): 475–86. For Colombia's ratification of Geneva Conventions, see "Decreto 896 de 1947," *Diario oficial* año LXXXII, no. 26387 (March 25, 1947), 6.
84. "Decreto 896 de 1947"; "Decreto 1858, 1951," *Diario oficial* año LXXXVIII, no. 27817 (January 31, 1952), 1.
85. "Decreto 14 de 1955," *Diario oficial* año XCI, no. 28661 (January 19, 1955), 1.
86. Alonso Salazar, *La cola del lagarto: Drogas y narcotráfico en la sociedad colombiana* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 1998), 19.
87. AGN, Colonial Penal Araracuara, no. 95, box 1; no. 196, box 6; no. 244, box 8; no. 245, box 8; no. 329, box 10; no. 385, box 12; no. 417, box 13; no. 428, box 13; no. 451, box 14; no. 453, box 14; no. 496, box 15; no. 533, box 16; no. 615, box 18; no. 617, box 18; no. 629, box 19; no. 706, box 21; no. 747, box 22; no. 770, box 23; no. 775, box 23; no. 808, box 24; no. 841, box 25; no. 1005, box 29; no. 1092, box 32; no. 1108, box 32, no. 1214, box 35.
88. Case 706, 1954–1958, in AGN, Colonia Penal Araracuara, no. 45, box 21.
89. Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria de la marihuana en Colombia," 215–17.
90. For a similar case of peasant soldiers smoking marijuana in Mexico during the Revolution, see Curtis Marez, *Drug Wars: The Political Economy of Narcotics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 105–45.
91. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 13–29.
92. Carlos Aguirre and Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Writing the History of Law, Crime, and Punishment in Latin America," in *Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society since Late Colonial Times*, ed. Gilbert Joseph, Carlos Aguirre, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 13.
93. Gonzalo Sánchez and Donny Meertens, *Bandoleros, gamonales y campesinos: El caso de La Violencia en Colombia* (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1983), 54.
94. Sánchez and Meertens, *Bandoleros, gamonales y campesinos*, 47–48.
95. On "moral panic" and the media, see Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (1994; reprint, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 88–108.

96. Álvaro Tirado Mejía, "Cambios económicos, sociales y culturales en los años sesenta del siglo XX," *Historia y Memoria* 12 (January–June 2016): 302.
97. Daniel Llano Parra, *Enemigos públicos: Contexto intelectual y sociabilidad literaria del movimiento nadaísta, 1958–1971* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, 2015), 25.
98. Juan Carlos Galeano, "El Nadaísmo y 'La Violencia' en Colombia," *Revista Iberoamericana* 59, no. 164 (July 1993): 647.
99. "Yo, un poeta, en las mismas circunstancias de opresión, miseria, miedo y persecución, también habría sido bandolero. Creo que hoy me llamaría 'General Exterminio.' Por eso le hago esta elegía a 'Desquite,' porque con las mismas posibilidades que yo tuve, él se habría podido llamar Gonzalo Arango." See Gonzalo Arango, *Obra Negra* (Bogotá: Plaza & Janés, 1993), 42–44.
100. Galeano, "El Nadaísmo y 'La Violencia' en Colombia," 647.
101. Brahimán Saganogo, "Nadaísmo colombiano: Ruptura socio-cultural o extravagancia expresiva," *Especulo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* 38 (March–June 2008), available at Universidad Complutense de Madrid, available at <http://webs.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero38/nadaism.html>.
102. Here I am paraphrasing Barba Jacob's aforementioned poem, "La dama de cabellos ardientes."
103. Colombia's demographic transition finally took off in 1951; by 1964, people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four constituted 18.2 percent of the population, a proportion that kept growing. See Rodrigo Parra Sandoval, *Ausencia de Futuro. La juventud colombiana* (Bogotá: Plaza & Janés, 1978), 26.
104. Cited in James D. Henderson, *Colombia's Narcotics Nightmare: How the Drug Trade Destroyed Peace* (2012; reprint, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 27.
105. On 1967 as the year when marijuana consumption first boomed in the United States, see Institute of Medicine, Division of Health Sciences Policy, *Marijuana and Health* (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1982), 38.
106. Paul Stares, *Global Habit: The Drug Problem in a Borderless World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996), 29; Richard Craig, "Operation Intercept: The International Politics of Pressure," *Review of Politics* 42, no. 4 (October 1980): 573; Richard Craig, "Colombian Narcotics and United States–Colombian Relations," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 23, no. 3 (August 1981): 243–70; Barry Farrell, "The Marijuana Famine," *Life Magazine* 67, no. 8 (August 22, 1969): 20B; Peggy J. Murrell for *Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 1969, quoted in Edward M. Brecher, "The Consumers Union Report on Licit and Illicit Drugs," *Consumer Reports Magazine* (1972).
107. On the five regions involved in the smuggling of marijuana and cocaine, including Bogotá's international airport, see "Apreciación de criminalidad presentada al Consejo Nacional de Seguridad por Policía Nacional: Panorama general, 1967–1972," AGN, Min. Interior, Sec. Gen., box 67, folder 1.
108. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Narcotics, *Marijuana and Health: Second Annual Report to Congress* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972), 9.

109. "CND, Agenda Item 6," and "Telegram, 12 OCT 71," in NARA, RG 59 (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters), box 1.
110. Betancourt and García, *Contrabandistas, marimberos y mafiosos*, 48.
111. Rodrigo Echeverri, untitled, unpublished manuscript on the marijuana export sector for Inderena, n.d. (circa 1979), Santa Marta, Colombia, Rodrigo Echeverri's personal archive, Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia. See also Ariel Martínez (agronomist for Inderena), interview by the author, January 21, 2011, Santa Marta, Magdalena, Colombia.
112. Carlos, interview by the author, no. 1, March 9, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia; Raúl, interview by the author; Callo, interview by the author; Rodrigo Echeverri, interview by the author, March 15, 2010, Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia, Colombia; Ariel Martínez, interview by the author.
113. Miguel Ángel López Hernández (Chijo's relative), interview by the author, March 10, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia.
114. "Chijo's recordings," tape 4, side B.
115. Mantequilla, interview by the author, March 11, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia.
116. "Letter from Luis Emilio Plata, officialist Liberal from Riohacha," September 17, 1962, AGN, Min. Interior, Despacho del Ministro, box 34, folder 290, roll 34, folios 23R, 24R; "Letter," October 2, 1962, *ibid.*, folios 1R, 2R; "Telegram," September 25, 1962, *ibid.*, folio 4R; "Letter," August 28, 1962, *ibid.*, folio 41R; "Letter," September 26, 1962, *ibid.*, folio 5R. See also Meña Melo (personal assistant of Guajira's *intendentes* and governors from 1962 to 1978), interview by the author.
117. Callo, interview by the author.
118. For police reports on Santa Marta and Valledupar as stopovers in the circuit of petty commerce in marijuana in the 1960s, see Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria de la marihuana en Colombia," 219.
119. Meco, interview by the author, January 17, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira, Colombia.
120. Enrique Herrera Barros, interview by the author, February 8, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia.
121. Callo, interview by the author.
122. Ariel Martínez, interview by the author.
123. Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 13, 51.
124. Jerry Kamstra, *Hierba: Aventuras de un contrabandista de marihuana* (1974; reprint, Mexico, DF: Editorial Grijalbo, SA, 1976), 37.
125. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Narcotics, *Marijuana and Health*, 30.
126. Juan "Ios" Vieira, interview by the author, March 30, 2005, Santa Marta, Magdalena, Colombia.
127. Howard S. Becker, "Marijuana Use and the Social Context," in *Marijuana*, ed. Erich Goode (New York: Atherton Press, 1970), 29.



128. Pablo Astorga, Ame R. Berges, and Valpy Fitzgerald, "The Standard of Living in Latin America during the Twentieth Century," *Economic History Review* 58, no. 4 (November 2005): 784. See also Ewout Frankema, "The Expansion of Mass Education in Twentieth-Century Latin America: A Global Comparative Perspective," *Revista de historia económica/Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History* 3 (winter 2009): 369; and Miguel Somoza Rodríguez, "Educación y movimientos populistas en América Latina: Una emancipación frustrada," *Historia de la Educación* 29 (2010): 175.
129. Martha Cecilia Herrera, "Historia de la educación en Colombia: la República Liberal y la modernización de la educación: 1930–1946," *Revista Colombiana de Educación* 26 (1993), available at <https://doi.org/10.17227/01203916.5297>. See also Laurence Gale, *Education and Development in Latin America, with Special Reference to Colombia and Some Comparison with Guyana, South America* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 29.
130. Vives, *La Guajira ante el Congreso de Colombia*, 56–60.
131. In the original Spanish: "Con esta noticia le fueron a mi mamá / que yo de lo flaco ya me parecía un fideo. / Y es el hambre del liceo / que no me deja engordá." Rafael Escalona, "El hambre del liceo," 1948.
132. Martín López González, interview by the author, February 14, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia.
133. López González, "Cambios en los procesos académicos, políticos y culturales de la sociedad riohachera producto de la bonanza marimbera"
134. "Chijo's recordings," tape 1, side A.
135. On "educational breach," see Parra Sandoval, *Ausencia de Futuro*, 59–60.
136. On rapid urbanization in the 1950s and 1960s, see Fabio Botero Gómez, *La ciudad colombiana* (Medellín: Ediciones Autores Antioqueños, 1991), 83–86.
137. Cervantes Angulo, *La noche de las luciérnagas*, 53.
138. Silvio, interview by the author. See also the documentary *Gamín*, directed by Ciro Durán (1977).
139. Silvio, interview by the author.
140. All quotations from Cervantes Angulo, *La noche de las luciérnagas*, 54–55.
141. Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire*, Vol. 3: *Century of the Wind* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 254.
142. On the value of oral history as providing meaning rather than factual information, see Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991), 1–26; Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life, History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 119–56; and Ronald J. Grele, "Oral History as Evidence," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, ed. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (New York: Altamira Press, 2007).
143. Miguel Ángel López Hernández, interview by the author.
144. All quotations from "Chijo's recordings," tape 1, side A.
145. "Chijo's recordings," tape 4, side A.

146. Germán Rojas, interview by the author, March 28, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira, Colombia. On secrecy as rule of the business in its beginnings, see Esperanza Ardila Beltrán, Álvaro Acevedo Merlano, and Luis Martínez González, “Memoria de la bonanza marimbera en Santa Marta,” *Oraloteca* 5 (2013): 55–79.

147. On Guajira’s “juridical pluralism,” see Orsini Aarón, *Poligamia y contrabando*, 103.

148. Valeria Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality from Perón to Videla* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 3.

### CHAPTER 3. SANTA MARTA GOLD

1. Partridge, “Exchange Relations in a Community on the North Coast of Colombia,” vi–vii.

2. On 1976 as the peak, see Ariel Martínez (agronomist for Inderena), interview by the author; ANIF, *Marihuana*, 74.

3. The US Drug Enforcement Administration estimated that in 1978 Colombia supplied 70 percent of the marijuana moved into the United States, a market comprising 26.6 million marijuana consumers. This represented 7,000 to 10,500 tons. See “The US Marihuana Market: Excerpt from the Narcotics Intelligence Estimate, December 1979,” *Drug Enforcement* (March 1980), 16.

4. On agricultural frontiers as a “safety valve” for accumulated social tensions in Colombia’s countryside, see LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia*, xv.

5. Germán Arciniegas, *The Knight of El Dorado: The Tale of Don Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada and His Conquest of New Granada, Now Called Colombia* (1939; reprint, New York: Viking Press, 1942), 38.

6. Arciniegas, *The Knight of El Dorado*, 37.

7. Partridge, “Exchange Relations in a Community on the North Coast of Colombia,” 163–74.

8. Partridge, “Exchange Relations in a Community on the North Coast of Colombia,” 37.

9. Partridge, “Exchange Relations in a Community on the North Coast of Colombia,” 133–34, 148–51.

10. Partridge, “Exchange Relations in a Community on the North Coast of Colombia,” 151.

11. On the advantages of oral history as a method for recovering memories, meanings, and voices of underrepresented social groups, see Paul Thompson, “The Voice of the Past: Oral History,” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 1988). For a discussion of conflictive narratives and orality, see Jeffrey Gould and Aldo Lauria-Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920–1932* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).