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Que(e)rying Black Intimacies and Spanish Colonial Archives

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

Latin American and Latino Studies

By

Bree Booth

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Abstract

Que(e)rying Black Intimacies and Spanish Colonial Archives

Bree Booth

My dissertation uses *que(e)rying* as a methodological and theoretical framework to analyze how early-modern criminal records from Spain and Colombia produced narratives about race, religion, gender, sexuality, and, by extension, intimacy, in the lives of enslaved people of African descent. In response, I put the cases into conversation with literary and visual texts—such as a diagram of the slave ship *Marie-Seraphique*, *Autobiografía de un esclavo* by Juan Francisco Manzano (along with some of his poems), *Chango, el gran putas* by Manuel Zapata Olivella, and *Insurrection: Holding History* by Robert O’Hara—to create counter-narratives to the ones suggested by the cases. As a result, my dissertation proposes that by *que(e)rying* these documents, we see how *queer intimacies* and an *intimacy of knowing* were cultivated in the lives of enslaved black people.

Introduction: All Aboard the Super-Powered-Super-Steamer

Jose Eusebio Rodriguez was enslaved by Don Francisco Jose Arboleda roughly between the late 1700s and early 1800s. The Arboleda family hailed from the Popayan region in Colombia; however, Jose did most of his labor in the Choco region, a place that was roughly five days away by walking. Slavery in Colombia differed a bit from slavery in the United States as captives were not always working on plantations or fields per se. Instead, many found themselves working in gold and silver mines or farms. Jose described doing a lot of his labor near the San Juan River and the Cauca Valley more generally.

Between 1801 and 1802, Jose said he ran away from a mine in Timbiqui after becoming afraid he would be blamed for a boat with corn sinking. This testimony, along with others from in and around Noanama, comes from a trial record housed in the *Negros y Esclavos* fundo al Archivo General de la Nación en Bogotá, Colombia. The record goes on to read that, after running away, Jose allegedly made his way to the corregimiento Noanama. There, he was accused of the crimes of seducing and kidnapping Indigenous girls and women. These charges saw him brought before the royal court of Novita. Thus, the footprints of his life can be traced through many places in the hinterlands of Northwest Colombia (see fig. 1).



Figure 1. “Nuanamo” or Noanama circled on Map of Colombia, 1835. Source: Archivo General de la Nación.

For Antonio Joseph, it is less clear what type of labor he was expected to do in Mallorca, Spain, in the 1600s. He was enslaved by Pedro Suner, an alguacil of the Holy Office of the Inquisition.^{1 2} Although his owner occupied a position in the holy office, details about him and his family are hard to come by. We know that Antonio was a dedicated Christian who did his prayers and tended to the needs of his neighbors. He was also known for spending lots of leisure time with “friends” playing

¹ Sometimes written “Sunyer” in the document.

² *Alguacil* translates to mean *bailiff* or *sheriff*. According to the PARES website, alguaciles were “Minister[s] of Justice with the power to arrest and carry the high rod of justice.” Portal de Archivos Españoles [PARES], “Alguaciles de La Inquisición,” accessed May 15, 2025, <https://pares.mcu.es:443/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/autoridad/104175>.

games and drinking wine with them. One of these people was allegedly Pedro Andres Coll, a 16-year-old Spanish teen from the neighboring island, Ibiza. We come to know details about Antonio's life and the subsequent trial he was involved in through an Inquisition trial record housed in el Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid, Spain. After witnesses claim they saw Antonio and Pedro engaged in an amorous struggle in "una garita de una muralla," Antonio and Pedro were brought before the Spanish Inquisition and tried for the crime of *pecado nefando de sodomía*.³ Although the footprints of Antonio's life are harder to come by, we can imagine the specters of his existence living on in Mallorca (see fig. 2).

³ Una Garita de una muralla translates roughly to a sentry tower or watch box.



Figure 2. Map of Balearic Islands, 1640.

Antonio's footprints can be traced back to Portal de Archivos Españoles, or PARES. I scoured PARES for documents related to intimacy, sexuality, and nonnormative relationships involving enslaved people of African descent. While doing so, I came across a document titled "Proceso de fe de Pedro Andres Coll."⁴ This document took me down a rabbit hole of discovering the weight that Inquisition

⁴ Portal de Archivos Españoles, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," accessed August 2, 2025, <https://pares.mcu.es:443/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/3748025>.

processes held for all parties involved as procesos de fe and autos da fe were systemic in their structures and outcomes—meaning there was not much difference between how one case carried on versus another. This differs a bit from the case in Colombia as, although it was tried in the royal court of Novita, the trial itself read as a bit more disjointed than the Inquisition trial. It was not as clear if the way the trial was documented was “normal” for the times or the result of a rushed process to punish an enslaved man. This led to the second leg of my archival work at the national archives of Colombia in Bogota. While there, I asked some of the archivists about finding documents related to the same things as the one from Spain—intimacy, sexuality, and nonnormative relationships involving enslaved people of African descent.

At first, this exercise felt less fruitful than how it unfolded for Spain; however, this quickly shifted as I instead adjusted my research plan to address what other contexts does intimacy and sexuality become criminalized for enslaved black people. Rather than thinking about potential consensual actions, the case with Jose involved considering when they were accused of violent sexual crimes such as rape. From these brief descriptions alone, we are able to gauge that Jose and Antonio were enslaved and lived in different sociopolitical contexts.

My interest in bringing these documents together is to craft a counter-narrative attuned to intimacy in the lives of these two people. I argue that the criminal case records present a limited idea of how intimacy and desire could be

attained by enslaved people of African descent, thus necessitating a *que(e)rying*.⁵ To do this, I first analyze how the cases construct a narrative related to blackness and intimacy, one that sees the two as adulterous, lascivious, and perhaps even violent. In an effort to redress the meanings reaffirmed by these narratives, I construct counter-narratives that reimagine the details of the case in a different light—one that marks enslaved people as intimate beings, navigating a treacherous terrain that saw them as unworthy of not only acting on desire but also as connecting with others and themselves.

To bolster these counter-narratives, I read the historical documents alongside literary works such as *Chango, el gran putas* by Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Insurrection: Holding History* by Robert O'Hara, and *Autobiografía de un Esclavo* by Juan Francisco Manzano along with some of his poems. These texts offer counterhistories of their own and peeks into queer [black] intimacies by actively writing from the perspective of the enslaved people as the main characters, allowing them to narrate their own personal experiences, especially as it relates to intimate encounters.

Some of the questions that animate my interest in the historical documents and literary texts are these: How does one come to know intimacy? An even better

⁵ *Que(e)rying* will be developed more in this chapter; however, it involves a reading with and against the grain of the archive.

question is perhaps, how does one come to know intimacy through the historical record? I will take this a step further and ask, how does one come to learn about queer intimacies in the lives of subjugated individuals through the historical record? If we think about the history of transatlantic slavery and the forced migration of African captives to the Old World and New, this question of intimacy becomes even more potent. In what ways do we come to know about queer [black] intimacies in the lives of captives?

Although many scholars have discussed the kinship bonds created among captives, especially in the Middle Passage, there is space to expand on the intimate nature of connections that potentially were not rooted in kinship. Thus, in this dissertation, I aim to show how que(e)rying literary texts and archival records from the early modern period reveals the queer [black] intimacies fomented among captives. These queer [black] intimacies nurtured an *intimacy of knowing* as well, a type of knowing that is bred from close proximity in the physical and heart space. In particular, as will be shown throughout the chapters, this intimacy of knowing was often grounded in notions of religion and race and confounded by gender and sexuality.

In an effort to hold all these narratives in a place that can move beyond the confines of these pages, I invite the reader to board my super-powered-super-steamer. This steamer is not a slave ship, although its usage is in homage to the captives who were carried to the Old and New World on them. The use of a super-

steamer is purposefully anachronistic as the steamer itself is being born throughout the pages of this project. It has an engine powerful enough to move us through time while simultaneously blurring the lines between truth and fiction. Our movement is not bounded by linearity as we move through different pasts and presents, those pasts and presents being relative to the place we are in. There are no seat-belts (though there are seats) or dedicated end dates and destinations. The super-steamer has yet to be named but the shape it takes can be described as just big enough to carry 6 to 20,000 people.⁶ The super-steamer can take us wherever we want to go and each stop fuels our counter-narrative driven travel.

All aboard the super-powered super-steamer meant to carry us through the most troubling and calmest of waters—to places and times I want to call Threshold Locations. Threshold Locations are the liminal spaces between what is known and what has yet to be discovered. Ann Louise Keating writes that “thresholds can be dangerous, uncomfortable locations-for both readers and writers. Thresholds mark crisis points, spaces where conflicting values, ideas, and beliefs converge, unsettling fixed categories of meaning.”⁷ On this super-steamer, there are no rules, except the

⁶ The shape of it expands as we encounter more narratives related to the intimate lives of enslaved black people. There is no limit, only more stories to find.

⁷ Ann Louise Keating, *Women Reading Women Writing* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 2.

main one of leaning into the discomfort that closeness requires, especially in unsettling what we think we know about enslaved people and their intimate lives. This vessel is meant to be a space to process the sometimes volatile narratives that will be witnessed in each chapter. This super-steamer, in essence, acts as a mobile archive; traveling along the Atlantic and Pacific gathering testimonies from black people, most enslaved, a few not.

The creation of this mobile archive is not to make light of the stories to come, but to offer a space to learn about and process them in tandem. No metaphor is perfect, but this one is in service to lingering in the complexities of what this dissertation has to offer. This method and super-steamer are made possible by que(e)rying as my analysis is not bounded by time or the evidence that the archive provides. Indeed, this dissertation is an interdisciplinary project dedicated to trying to divulge more about intimate histories that sometimes read as not having sufficient parts. Although disparate, the parts that make up this mission are the historical and literary texts alike. To keep our ocean travels alive and viable, we must prepare for the journey. All aboard as we approach the conceptual and methodological realms that makes this mobile archive possible.

Race and Religion in the Colonial Context

Previously, I mentioned that Jose and Antonio lived in different sociopolitical contexts in Spain and Colombia. Alongside considering those contexts, we must also think about the ones presented by the slave-ship diagrams and literary texts. To

better understand these contexts, it is important to underscore how race and religion were used as a means to categorize people and further colonial missions of Western powers. In this section, I will offer a brief discussion of the contexts of each chapter based on a particular understanding of race and religion: that is, both as identity markers and prevailing nodes of power that relegate people to certain positions in society. These hierarchies persist because they equate to the accumulation of capital and territory. This understanding of race and religion makes clear the necessity of studying the axis of intimacy, as race and religion were used as ways to mediate intimate moments between enslaved people and colonial subjects alike. By considering race and religion alongside the axis of intimacy, I seek to develop the terms *queer intimacies* and *the intimacy of knowing*.

Before getting into the specifics of those terms, let us first examine how race and religion were deployed by the different colonial powers. In her text, Katharyn Burns describes how the two can be understood in the context of Latin America through two main arguments: that racial categories were fluid and shaped by local political, social, and economic dynamics and that race intertwined with religion and social status to indicate one's social standing and cultural ties.⁸ This is evidenced in the record from Colombia and Spain as we see race and religion used as a means to

⁸ Katharyn Burns, "Unfixing Race," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, by Margaret R. Greer et al. (University of Chicago Press, 2008), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=408440>.

characterize the degree to which the accused and the witnesses in the case could be believed. We also see this in the texts by Manzano, Olivella, and O'Hara as all three include characters that constantly contend with their spiritual relationships with God and their ancestors.

For chapter 1, in particular, it just so happens that for Jose's trial in Colombia, the witnesses were majorly Indigenous and the accused, Jose, was black. Encounters between the two groups were not out of the ordinary, especially in the Choco region of Colombia. As it relates to the Choco region and Colombia, enslaved captives first started arriving in the 1500s, with African captives being brought to Cartagena de Indias to start building the budding port city. Colombia is an interesting case as in its history; it was once a shared viceroyalty (at different points in time) with countries like Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador. For the criminal case record that I look at from 1802, Colombia was at the time a part of Virreinato de Nueva Granada. Still operating under Spain's rule, during this time we see many pushes for independence on behalf of Colombians tired of living under the King's rule.⁹

Although Cartagena was the main point of entry for captives coming into Nueva Granada, many found their way to the Choco region as the Choco was a pivotal space for gold mining. In the census from 1778–1780, it was estimated there were about 65,000 slaves living in Colombia, making up about 7.6 percent of the

⁹ King Charles IV was king at the time, reigning from December 1788 to March 1808.

population of about 855,000 people.¹⁰ As I will go on to discuss in chapter 1, there was plenty racial mixing in the area as there were Indigenous groups also living in the hinterlands of the country. We see this even more in the Choco region as there were corregimientos established near the mining districts where enslaved black people did most of their labor.

According to William F. Sharp, the peak number of enslaved people in the Choco was around 7,088 in 1782. By 1804, this population had dropped a bit to 4,968.¹¹ This could be attributed to many reasons such as death or even captives running away to nearby towns or palenques. A well-known example of one of these places is San Basilio de Palenque. Anthony McFarlane explores this in his article, writing that San Basilio is the best known example of a community that earned its right to exist by engaging in constant warfare with slaveowners on Colombia's coast and eventually coming to an agreement with the Spanish crown.¹²

We can think of the work of Jane Landers and her exploration of *palenques*, or fortified and somewhat permanent communities of maroons in Colombia.¹³ In her

¹⁰ Anthony Mcfarlane, "Cimarrones and Palenques Runaways and Resistance in Colonial Colombia," *Historia y Espacio*, no. 14 (August 30, 2018): 53–78, <https://doi.org/10.25100/hye.v0i14.6846>.

¹¹ William F. Sharp, "The Profitability of Slavery in the Colombian Chocó, 1680-1810," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 55, no. 3 (August 1, 1975): 468–95, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-55.3.468>.

¹² Mcfarlane, "Cimarrones and Palenques," 135.

¹³ Jane Landers, "The African Landscape of Seventeenth-Century Cartagena and Its Hinterlands," in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, edited by Jorge Cañizares-

text “The African Landscape of Seventeenth-Century Cartagena and Its Hinterlands,” in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, Landers provides a historical overview on the construction of different coalitions of Afro-diasporic communities across Cartagena de Indias. Given their propensity to revolt against Spanish armies sent to “reduce” them, the Spanish crown had no choice but to issue a royal decree in 1686 giving freedom to maroon communities, making them “enfranchised *vecinos*.”¹⁴ Lander’s discussion of Cartagena highlights how maroon communities engaged in active resistance against Spanish conquest. They did this by forming alliances among each other in the palenques, “[carving] out niches for themselves in the most inhospitable reaches where Spainards did not care to live.”¹⁵ Maroon communities living in Cartagena’s hinterlands fortified strong communities, armed with European weapons, and destroyed their own before they allowed the Spanish to pillage them.

The works of Landers, Mcfarlane, and Sharp is pertinent as it gives an idea of how enslaved black people navigated the terrain in the hinterlands of Colombia. The scholarship notes that oftentimes African-descended people were seeking refuge

Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 147–62.

¹⁴ Landers, “The African Landscape,” 152.

¹⁵ Landers, “The African Landscape,” 152.

from enslavement by building their own communities in the outskirts of places like Cartagena and colonial Quito. This is particularly interesting to consider in the case against Jose Eusebio because, instead of finding one of these maroon communities to run away to, he landed in a place that was predominantly inhabited by Indigenous people. Although one might think that that may lend some type of “safety” for Jose, we see the opposite in the case as there was essentially a manhunt to expel him from the community. This manhunt was fueled by the prevailing perceptions of enslaved black people as dangerous and not human. Not only this, it relied on a fraught relationship between black and Indigenous people. Thus the work of these scholars offers context to the case as they illuminate the structure of interethnic relationships among black and Indigenous people in the region.

As it relates to the context of Spain in chapter 2, at the time of the trial and the accusations made against Antonio and Pedro, Spain was still a part of the “Iberian Union” with Portugal. This union began in 1580 and ended in 1640 (roughly seven years after the alleged encounter between Antonio and Pedro). The trial itself did not take place until 1637. Although Spain and Portugal were a part of the “Iberian Union” together, it is important to note that this alliance was merely for economic and political reasons and came about after a succession crisis in Portugal

led to the ascent of King Phillip II of Spain to become the king of Portugal.¹⁶ The union eventually came to an end as Portugal was concerned about Spain's participation in multiple conflicts with Portugal typically taking on the financial burden of these affairs. This is less important to the dissertation; however, I highlight the Iberian Union because it was through this union that Spain grew its population of enslaved African people in its American colonies following Portugal's successes in establishing a trade network on the western shores of Africa.

Spain itself did not rely on slave labor in the ways the American colonies did. In fact, according to William D. Phillips, enslaved people made up less than 1 percent of the population in Spain (with around 7 percent for Portugal).¹⁷ Although Spain would not be considered a slave society—given that the economy was not dependent on slavery and also the small population of enslaved people—there was still a concerted effort made to equate blackness with servitude. Even more, this context may help us understand how or why captives sought out each other for intimate moments and to what degree that could be achieved. Central to this discussion, too, is how religion played a factor in these distinctions.

¹⁶ *The Iberian Union—The Reason Why It Didn't Work (1580-1660)*, YouTube Video, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sS1KYtQhjm>.

¹⁷ William D. Phillips, Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

Because of the ongoing conflicts between Christians, Muslims, and Jews, the Spanish crown made it a point to distinguish between who was a “New Christian” versus an “Old Christian.” New Christians were those who had converted to Christianity as a result of trying to secure their rights in Spanish society. This discussion is taken up by Burns, and we can also think about how Black and enslaved people used these distinctions to maneuver their way through society, often filing petitions as Old Christians in an effort to get their filings approved for various reasons, including travel to the Americas. Leo J. Garofalo discusses this in his text “Afro-Iberian Subjects: Petitioning the Crown at Home, Serving the Crown Abroad, 1590s-1630s.”¹⁸ Garofalo’s study focuses on three Afro-Iberian women who took on the identity of subjects of the crown to benefit from the system. Critical to this study is Garofalo’s assertion that these Afro-Iberian women claimed Old Christian as opposed to New Christian as part of their identity ensuring that it would get their cases approved.

Although African descended people were able to travel to the Americas under the moniker of Old Christian, there was a concerted effort to keep Afro New Christians in the bounds of southern Spain and Portugal because Afro New Christians

¹⁸ Leo J. Garofalo, “Afro-Iberian Subjects: Petitioning the Crown at Home, Serving the Crown Abroad, 1590s–1630s,” in *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early Modern Ibero-Atlantic World, 1550–1812*, by Kathryn Joy McKnight and Leo J. Garofalo, 52–64 (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 2009), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=515899>.

represented a threat to the order maintained by the Spanish Crown, thus redefining the social hierarchy of the time. This discussion taken up by Garofalo highlights an important aspect of Spain during this time, that being the racialization of religion. As Garofalo states, the *new* identity of Spain (during their colonial rule) wedded religion and nationalism in a way that solidified membership/belonging and exclusions.¹⁹

The conflation of race and religion in this way allowed for subjects who would be read as inferior in society (e.g., Afro-Iberians) to garner some type of social mobility by way of being Old Christians. This coalesces with a similar discussion taken up by Phillips as he explores how converts relied on their conversion and knowledge of Christianity to evade punishment.

We can think here, too, of the article, “What Did Medieval Slavery Look Like? Color, Race, and Unfreedom in Later Medieval Iberia,” by Pamela A. Patton.²⁰ Patton looks at images from the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. These images, she states, shows the tendency of medieval artists in Christian Iberia to depict enslaved and other unfree people as having dark skin and “stereotyped features often taken by modern viewers to imply sub-Saharan African origin” at a time when enslaved black people were a distinct

¹⁹ Garofalo, “Afro-Iberian Subjects,” 89.

²⁰ Pamela A. Patton, “What Did Medieval Slavery Look Like? Color, Race, and Unfreedom in Later Medieval Iberia,” *Speculum* 97, no. 3 (July 2022): 649–97, <https://doi.org/10.1086/720119>.

minority.²¹ She argues that the records served as “imaginative constructions” to affirm the subjugation of the predominantly non-black Muslim captives that Christian Iberian slavers depended on. As she goes on to say, “Incorporating racially charged, symbolic views of blackness and whiteness that were generated in antiquity and continued to pervade Iberia’s medieval Christian, Jewish, and Muslim cultures, these images articulated the cultural, social, and moral differences believed to mark the enslaved in medieval Iberian society.”²²

This discussion of Christianity and race as taken up by Phillips, Garofalo, and Patton helps us better understand the power wielded by the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition was responsible for the forced conversion of Muslims and Jews to Christianity. By extension, those processes were used as a way to reaffirm an image or idea of black enslaved people living in the Iberian Peninsula at the time. Although it is not clear if Antonio was an “old” or “new” Christian, in the case, we see his owner relying on the notions of being a “good” Christian to argue for his innocence. This is positioned against the character of the principal witness, Juan Foyos, who Antonio’s owner argued was essentially a “bad” Christian as he was known to be a liar, a trickster, and also deceitful. The assertions put forth by Patton are particularly

²¹ Patton, “What Did Medieval Slavery Look Like,” 651.

²² Patton, “What Did Medieval Slavery Look Like,” 652.

relevant to the discussion at hand as it becomes clearer why, despite the best efforts of Antonio's owner, these distinctions of "good" and "bad" Christian fall short as Antonio is ultimately still seen as guilty. This is exacerbated by the fact that he was black and enslaved (versus Juan Foyos, a white Spaniard). Thus, the works of Garofalo, Phillips, and Patton offers context to how race and religion were understood by the Inquisition at the time of the trial.

The works of the scholars mentioned previously for chapters one and two can help us understand the contexts of Manzano's work in chapter 3 as it was written by an Afro-Cuban slave living in Cuba during Spain's reign. For Manzano's poems and autobiography, the ideas of "good" and "bad" Christian are especially potent as Manzano often contended with his relationship to God and the Christian faith and the fight/suffering he was willing to take on if it meant being saved from this Earth. His understanding of faith was heavily influenced by his status as enslaved, losing family members like his brother, and his position as a "house boy for his mistress."

Manzano's writing shows the nuance and complexity of believing in God as a black formerly enslaved person. These sentiments echo in Olivella's text and his mythic *Chango* was created with the very purpose of disrupting the westernized embrace of Christianity and Catholicism. Olivella, instead, calls for a deeper understanding of African spiritual traditions like that of the Yoruba where "good" and "bad" were not necessarily determining factors for how unfree people were

judged or seen inside and outside of the spiritual realm. For the slave ship diagram of the *Marie-Seraphique* and O'Hara's play in chapter 3, we can turn to the works of Yvonne Patricia Chireau, Stephanie E. Smallwood, Jessica Marie Johnson, Jennifer Morgan, and Sowande Mustakeem who look at race and religion to understand the context of the Middle Passage and the plantations of the US south.

These scholars have written about how enslaved black women had their bodies and wombs mutilated by ship crews, slave masters, and mistresses. Not only were the women vessels to create human life, they were also used and abused as pleasure for the people wielding control over them. The violence they faced fueled the system of enslavement across the Americas as, not only were they reproducing the labor force, they were also reproducing more commodities to be sold across the Atlantic. The condition of enslaved people's bodies were dependent on the value they could produce for their owners. In an effort to control how enslaved people interacted with each other and white people, slave masters across the US south relied on notions of heaven and hell and a wrathful God to maintain control over their unfree labor source.

Similar to their counterparts across Latin America, black enslaved people in the United States still managed to shapeshift Christianity to better fit the needs of their community. In her book *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*, Yvonne Patricia Chireau traverses the histories of hoodoo and

root-working in the United States.²³ She narrativizes the syncretized forms of worship that brought together Christianity and Vodou to create denominations such as Baptist and Hoodoo, processes that illuminate the relationship between magic and religion. Thus, Chireau’s work helps us understand the context of O’Hara’s play *Insurrection* as the main characters often debate on this very relationship—what are the links between magic and religion? To what extent can the “magic man” in the sky save them from the miseries of slavery?

Unfortunately for captives, that misery often did not end or begin on plantations. Many scholars identify the Middle Passage as a space that ensured eternal displacement and physical and mental disarray. Mustakeem contends that black women on both sides of the Atlantic were kept in a cycle of sexual exploitation.²⁴ She uses “sexual economy of slavery” to highlight how slave traders used transactional sex to facilitate business relationships needed to purchase captives. These preconceived notions of black female sexuality (and arguably black masculinity) created the conditions for sexual violence against captives and also emphasized the slave ship and Middle Passage as a liminal space where both captives and crew members lost parts of themselves.

²³ Yvonne Patricia Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (University of California Press, 2003).

²⁴ Sowande M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

To capture how enslaved black women responded to these violences in an effort to protect themselves and others, Johnson conceptualizes *la traversee*, a predatory network of exchanges, forced migrations, and acts of resistance rooted in war and conquest.²⁵ *La traversee*, for women landing in Louisiana during the transatlantic slave trade, “[forged] kinship ties and [protected] the most intimate parts of their lives” as life on the ships was desperate and life-ending for many.²⁶ In considering the value of the captives, this process also involved them being stripped down of what they already knew of communal relations as it related to gender.

This connects to the work of Smallwood as she makes the argument that, for African captives travelling on the Middle Passage, an “anomalous intimacy” was formed and not based on the idea of a monolithic “black” identity.²⁷ Indeed, this intimacy was formed in the context of unparalleled displacement, a time-space reckoning that saw captives finding new ways to communicate their disparate experiences in a language they all could understand. This same intimacy grounded *la traversee*, which coalesced their physical displacement with the mental displacement from home and family, creating new circumstances for understanding

²⁵ Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, Illustrated ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 78.

²⁶ Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 79.

²⁷ Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, Illustrated ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008)

the self in relation to their *new* status as commodities.²⁸ The discussions taken up by these scholars point to an important aspect of the slave trade, that being the human manufacturing process of turning people of African descent into commodities. Their work makes clear that writing from the perspective of the enslaved means a particular attention to the details of their unmaking.

As they all remark in their own ways, to turn humans into commodities, slavers had to create race and dismantle gender (just to rebuild it again), thereby marking black people as imagined bodies meant to bend and break to the needs of the colonies. However, as captives showed time and time again, although death was looming, they had more power than slave traders could have ever imagined. Through more than just rebelling and rioting aboard ships, enslaved people sought out each other for comfort, protection, and solace.

This is where my dissertation enters the conversation as I home in on the particulars of the creation and sustaining of intimacy among captives as result of their enslavement. Even more, I develop what I term *queer intimacies* and by extension, *the intimacy of knowing*, as a way to explain not only the physical closeness of captives but also the mental and emotional closeness that could only be

²⁸ This included the formation of a “black or African” identity that generations of captives eventually leaned into in service to securing their own freedoms. We can think of abolition movements across the Americas and the creation of maroon communities, quilombos, and palenques as fortified communities meant to protect their black inhabitants.

fomented as a result of their captivity. Queer intimacies can be considered a disruption to the normative ways of relating as established by colonial forces. Even more, these queer intimacies made way for the intimacy of knowing, as captives' knowledge or lack thereof the transatlantic journey required vulnerability and a trust of unknown others to remember their names and the conditions of their journey.

Que(e)rying Archives, *Black Intimacies* and the *Intimacy of Knowing*

With these understandings of race and religion, we are better able to engage the axis of intimacy as intimate moments were shaped by perceptions and classifications of the two. To discuss intimacy, it is imperative to underscore how the attainment of it was mediated by the creation of gender and sexuality, that is “normative” gender and sexuality (i.e., only two genders and one sexuality—heterosexuality). Through the buying and selling of captives, we see the construction of what was considered “male/man” and “female/woman.” This is closely tied to intimacy as these binaries constituted what was seen as appropriate ways of relating to one another, not only for captives but for New World subjects more generally. We see this in the cases against Jose and Antonio as both were judged by witnesses and lawyers alike on how well they embodied their “roles” as men. Ironically

enough, both men were deemed guilty because they acted outside of the bounds of what was considered “normal” for men.²⁹

One of the main ways gender and sex is approached in the literature is through analysis of labor models used by Europeans to maximize their profit. This included buying more male captives than female captives at different times over the course of the trade. We see this in the works of scholars such as David Eltis and G. Ugo Nwokeji who have shown how enslaved people navigated the slippery slope between being human and treated as commodities. Nwokeji focuses less on the aspect of intimacy; however, his work offers an explanation of how enslaved men and women were funneled into gender categories created by European traders to maximize their labor.³⁰ He and Eltis’s work is similar in the sense that both contend that African women went from being seen as arduous laborers in different communities in Africa to African men being seen as the best workers in the New World context.³¹ Attached to these ideas about what constitutes a “man” or “woman” is the importance of reproduction.

²⁹ Jose was accused of “satiating his appetite” by seducing and kidnapping girls and women, and Antonio was accused of sodomy with another man.

³⁰ G. Ugo Nwokeji, “African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 47–68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674418>.

³¹ David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Lamonte Aidoo discusses this in his text, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*, where he makes the argument that sexual violence against enslaved people simultaneously reaffirmed white hetero-patriarchy in Brazil while also keeping those violences “unseen” in the archive.³² This is entangled with notions of reproduction as both enslaved and white women were expected to reproduce the laborers and heirs to white wealth, thus showing how the power wielded by white male elites used racial hierarchies to reaffirm sexual hierarchies. These structures informed how intimacy was attained and also sets the ground work for *que(e)rying archives*, *black intimacies* and the *intimacy of knowing*, as these terms offer a lens to reread moments labeled as criminal as instead moments that went against what was defined as “normal.” Therefore, this next section will be dedicated to laying out how que(e)rying the archive (in particular criminal case records) brings narratives of queer [black] intimacies to fruition, and how these same queer [black] intimacies further reveal an intimacy of knowing.

Que(e)rying Archival Silences

For our super-steamer to finish its preparation for ocean travel, we have to round out our theoretical and methodological toolkit. This section will discuss the methods that make up my project. Those methods are archival methods, critical

³² Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

fabulation, and creative writing that are all guided by queer theory. As such, I follow the path set up by the scholars before me who take on the task of “queering the archive;” although, here I would like to call it que(e)rying the archive.³³ Que(e)rying places emphasis on the queering of archival work and also the query into what archives unearth (both the documents and the institution itself). We can think of the work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Ann Stoler, Amy L. Stone, Jennifer Cantrell, Phoebe Kisubi Mbasalaki, and Saidiya Hartman.

In an effort to recuperate what is sometimes subverted by archives, Saidiya Hartman has created a framework called critical fabulation that allows for a different presentation of historical *facts*. Hartman writes:

By playing with and rearranging the basic elements of the story, by re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view, I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done.³⁴

In other words, critical fabulation involves a weaving together of sometimes disparate parts through archival methods, narrative fiction, and critical social theory. As Hartman states, the purpose of this methodology is to “imagine what might have happened.”

³³ A term borrowed from Faedra Chatard Carpenter’s “Robert O’Hara’s Insurrection: ‘Que(e)Rying History,’” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 323–348, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822387220-021>.

³⁴ Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

In thinking about my dissertation project, I see critical fabulation as necessary to bring the story of people such as Antonio Joseph and Jose Eusebio Rodriguez to life. It involves recounting what happened with a reorientation to the people who were not meant to be centered or accounted for in the words of Stephanie Smallwood. In the case of Antonio Joseph, what we know of him comes from an Inquisition case for a different person (Pedro Andres Coll). Pedro and Antonio were caught engaging in nonnormative sex, and Pedro, the younger of the two, is the one on trial; yet, details about Antonio are just as apparent. Critical fabulation in action then would look like a narrative reformulation of what happened between Antonio and Pedro. Important to note here, too, is that this exercise is simply meant to imagine and convey a different historical perspective. It is not speaking for those that cannot be spoken to; it is instead saying what we know about them more clearly and more attentively. As this dissertation progresses, I invite the reader to fall into the thresholds created by critical fabulation.

Although I do not have the necessary “sources” to complete a recombinant narrative, I do take the opportunity to form a counter-narrative that considers the specificities of multiple narratives in one. Critical fabulation along with que(e)rying opens up a path not only to read historical documents but also to convey their meanings. I use que(e)rying as a way to read a text and critical fabulation to write about them. These uses are not fixed as the reading and writing happen at the same

time. Even more, the creation of these narratives lives on in our super-steamer, awaiting more narratives to converse with.

The project of que(e)rying the archive itself is a necessary one as archives often act as spaces that reaffirm notions of truth, power, and authority. Many scholars have explored the relationship between silence, historical narrative, and fiction. This involves explaining the role power plays in creating silences in the production of historical narratives.³⁵ Silences lend to the creation of fictions in that there are some parts of historical narratives left unknown or unaccounted for.³⁶ These same scholars often posit that “authority” and “authenticity” have broadened to consider voices beyond those traditionally seen as having *power*.³⁷ In thinking about these notions of authority and authenticity, other scholars (e.g., Ann Stoler) have written about institutions like archives taking on their own notions of the two. She contends that archives lean into these notions and in the process create their

³⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 20th Anniversary ed. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015); Francis X. Blouin, Jr., and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives*, Reprint ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*. Johnson’s concept “null value” is used to name archival silences.

³⁶ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Stephanie E. Smallwood, “The Politics of the Archive and History’s Accountability to the Enslaved,” *History of the Present* 6, no. 2 (October 1, 2016): 117–32. Smallwood makes the argument that slavery’s archive permits an “accountable” history of slave trading that makes sense in attempting to justify its existence.

³⁷ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, 17.

own common sense, a colonial common sense in particular.³⁸ The works of these scholars incite the inquiries taken up in these pages. They raise the question: If the authority vested to archival institutions is upheld by a common sense or historical continuity, does this then become a premise for counter-archives or new archival technologies like que(e)rying and critical fabulation?

I am a bit biased, but I am inclined to say yes, as they are the methods that brought this project to life. The common sense defined by Stoler informs Stone and Cantrell's metaphor of the archive as closet.³⁹ Stone and Cantrell contend that the closet and archives are queer spaces, or "systems of secret keeping."⁴⁰ In this regard, the colonial common sense is queered as the metaphor exposes the inability of the archive and the closet to effectively obscure narratives that are not a part of the "norm." Stone and Cantrell argue that the "norm" presents a conundrum as archives are supposedly meant to create "legibility" for historical subjects. This supposed

³⁸Colonial common sense can be defined as not necessarily being concerned with the silences of Dutch colonial archives or reversing what is present. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Another great term to consider is Mbasalaki's "hegemonic customary," which she uses to describe how violence becomes "customary" in upholding heteropatriarchy and the (colonial) cultural archive. The (colonial) cultural archive alienates queerness or homosexuality from Africanness, marking Africans as either homophobic or same-sex desire as fictive. Phoebe Kisubi Mbasalaki, "Through the Lens of Modernity: Reflections on the (Colonial) Cultural Archive of Sexuality and Gender in South Africa," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 26, no. 3 (2020): 455–75.

³⁹ Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, *Out of the Closet, into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015).

⁴⁰ Stone and Cantrell, *Out of the Closet*, 4.

legibility renders certain identities as illegible (e.g., trans and nonbinary people, disabled people, black people and other people of color). This is evidenced in the cases I explore as Antonio and Jose are legible in the sense that their status as enslaved so obviously informed the criminal processes they were involved in. On the other hand, they are made illegible because of how those processes were documented. Again, que(e)rying and critical fabulation become operative here as I seek to reformulate narrative structures of historical documents to make the subjects legible in *new ways*.

The explorations of the mentioned scholars are critical to understanding the context of my dissertation in that they articulate how certain archival institutions and materials reproduce ideas or narratives about their subjects. Hegemonic customary, along with Stoler's colonial common sense, highlights the concerted effort made to reinforce particular ideas about particular groups of people. Here, too, we harken back to Stone and Cantrell's preposition that archives simultaneously mark black, brown, queer, and disabled people as both legible and illegible. In the case of Antonio and Jose, we see this as they were never truly granted innocence or the benefit of the doubt. That is because the customary marked them and other [enslaved] black people as disregardable and criminal. This common sense is tracked and queered through my chapters as although Antonio and Jose lived on different continents, their lives and crimes were seen in similar lights.

[Black] Intimacies and the Intimacy of Knowing

To ground my discussion and use of black intimacies, I want to return to Johnson and Smallwood's "null value" and "accountable histories." These concepts coalesce as both Johnson and Smallwood assert that slave owners and other officials are responsible for black life going missing and unacknowledged in the archive (i.e., unaccountable histories).⁴¹ These concepts underscore the governing structure of colonial societies as responsible for black people missing from the archive, both free and enslaved. Despite this, it should not be equated with black death. As Johnson argues, if black women could not be worn down as "laboring, sordid, or lecherous subjects," it would not be likely to find them mentioned in the official record. If black people did not bend to the will of colonial elites, the retaliation of such was both physical, mental, and historical. This means black people could be abused, assaulted, and even killed, and still the historical "memory" of such could go unaccounted for.

Although my chapters do not cover cases that involved enslaved black women, Johnson's "null value" and Smallwood's explorations of "very accountable histories" were useful terms for grounding the archival research I undertook. In particular, as will be discussed later, although the main persons involved with the criminal cases I analyze were "present" during the proceedings, there still seems to be not a lot or enough to be known about them through the cases themselves. The

⁴¹ Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*; Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive."

unacknowledged or missing parts of their lives and stories from the archive highlights the social structure of colonial societies across the Americas. Although the context of French Louisiana differs from that of Spanish Colombia or English Jamaica, the archives of many of these places emphasize how many null values exist and also the degree to which they are accountable to the enslaved people involved.

This is pertinent to my dissertation because, in the criminal case records from Spain and Colombia, the null values were clear even while enslaved black people were present. Moreover, the aspect of slave owners and officials being responsible “for missing and unacknowledged black life in the archive” is also revealed through the cases as the stories of the enslaved people involved in the cases are either brief or not given at all. This, too, speaks to what degree these case records can be accountable to Antonio and Jose as enslaved people who have traces of their lives in these documents. In fact, in the case of chapter 1 and the case against Jose Eusebio Rodriguez, we learn a lot about how he became enslaved and even about the family that owned him. There are some secondary sources available about his owner’s family and even some archival traces of them in Colombia’s national archives (an almost accountable history).

On the other hand, we know very little about Antonio Joseph, the enslaved man involved in the case discussed in chapter 2. Even though his owner was an official of the holy office, there are barely any secondary sources about him or his family and, in the case itself, we do not learn anything really about how Antonio

became enslaved by his owner. Although both of these cases have null values that leave a desire to know more about Jose and Antonio, it was doubly reaffirmed that the details that were lacking about them did not equate to their death.

Null values and accountable histories also animates the necessity of que(e)rying as que(e)rying both questions the logics and dominant understanding of a text and reveals the intimacies at the heart of them. *Diccionario de Autoridades* defines “intimidad” (intimacy) as “confianza amistosa, o amistad estrecha de corazón.”⁴² I take this definition a bit further to consider queer intimacies and queer [black] intimacies, or those intimacies that perpetuate a type of closeness to the heart that the Spanish colonial system sought to rebuke.⁴³ We can consider queer intimacies aboard the slave ship *Marie-Seraphique* (discussed in chapter 3) and the two enslaved males who were recorded as running away together. We can think, too, of Antonio and Pedro Andres in chapter 2, who potentially relied on each other for a moment of solace and calm and not sex. The queer intimacies revealed from que(e)rying the documents in chapters one, two, and three show how being allegedly caught in acts deemed as nonnormative further perpetuated the otherness

⁴² [Friendly trust, or friendship close to the heart] comes from *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726–1739), Tomo IV (1734), accessed August 6, 2024, <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html>.

⁴³ Put another way, I switch between queer intimacies and queer [black] intimacies to describe the relationships that were marked as criminal or nonnormative in the historical documents and literary works alike.

of the people involved by marking their desire for closeness as criminal and unnatural.

The circumstances of the cases that point to potential queer [black] intimacies also reveal what I want to call an *intimacy of knowing*. Going back to notions of race and religion, the intimacy of knowing is particularly fruitful when thinking about captives' knowledge or lack thereof as it relates to the Atlantic journey and slavery itself as captives relied on each other for what they did not know. Another aspect of this is the intimacy that the fight for freedom foments among enslaved people of African descent. Religion/faith/belief is one axis to achieve this, because, not only were enslaved people fomenting intimate relationships with God and faith, but they were also using this relationship to God and faith to maintain their relationships among each other and to guide their paths to freedom. This harkens back to why I call it the intimacy of knowing, as the vulnerability required to share in faith and belief welcomes the other into a world that is usually seen as personal. This intimacy of knowing comes through in the historical and literary texts, fabulation of the story of two captives from the *Marie-Seraphique* and the two girls on the *Recovery*.

Here again, we return to our counter-narrative driven super-powered super-steamer to create the space for their desire for queer intimacy to be expressed. Queer becomes operative here as I emphasize how these intimacies were doubly marked as “not normal” simply because they involved black enslaved people in what

was read as nonnormative encounters. In the case of Jose, this was his alleged terrorizing of Indigenous girls and women. For Antonio, it was his alleged sexual encounter with a Spanish teen from Ibiza. What might we gain from rereading these records through this lens? I suggest that we are able to resituate queer black intimacies as a delicate, lifelong battle for legibility through the law and sociocultural engagements. Even more, by putting these records in conversation with the literary works of O'Hara, Olivella, and Manzano, our mobile archive becomes more robust as we consider stories crafted from below, or rather narratives crafted with the desires and voices of enslaved black people at the forefront.⁴⁴

This is sticky terrain to navigate as it is a delicate balance between honoring what is said to have happened while still taking the risk to imagine what might have happened. In taking the leap to *fabulate* and *queer*, I want to briefly highlight how Bianca Premo accounts for the myriad of experiences of feeling by conducting a historical project with civil disputes to consider the legal history of slavery in the history of emotion. Premo helps us understand our own feelings and emotions about slave history, as opposed to feelings of the enslaved. This rhetorical move serves as a reminder of how critical it is to understand sentiments expressed by historical actors in the moment that they were occurring instead of through our

⁴⁴ From below meaning not from the perspective of the powers that be.

modern lens of emotives. Premo uses “emotive” in her text in reference to the work of historian William Reddy in his book, *The Navigation of Feeling*.⁴⁵

I highlight Premo defining Reddy because of its necessity in studies of intimacy, sexuality, and slavery in the context of today. As Premo argues in her text, our reasonable apprehension or emotional response to learning about master/slave relationships is based in an “emotional regime” founded on the liberal notion of agency, history, and humanity itself—hence the invitation to understand how feeling was constructed and navigated outside of our own understanding of emotion. Although this topic as undertaken by Premo is more concerned with paternal or filial rather than romantic or sexual relationships, I see her text as integral to exploring the many ways captives fomented bonds while still in bondage. Notions of love were entangled with notions of interest (i.e., a master expressing affection for their slave in exchange for the slave’s labor), and these affective ties, Premo argues, were relied on by the enslaved person, slave owners, and judges alike. In which case, what Premo’s text offers is another framework or lens into how enslaved people used desire and feeling to advocate for better relationships for themselves and their

⁴⁵ William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 118. Emotives “permits scholars to sidestep the vexing question of whether language about emotion actually reflects some true inner state by reversing the order and proposing that the utterance of an emotion leads to its historical realization. Such a rendering releases the constraints imposed by the modern separation of ‘feelings’ from ‘interests.’” Bianca Premo, “As If She Were My Own: Love and Law in the Slave Society of Eighteenth-Century Peru,” in *Sexuality and Slavery*, edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt22nmc8r.9>.

families. Even more, this lens encourages surveyors of this history not to risk “turning slaves into cyphers for our modern imaginings of the self—a being whose historical value is only realized in a relentless searching for totalized, individual autonomy.”⁴⁶ In other words, we cannot shift the enslaved to fit our modern desires for freedom. We also cannot conceive of their subjectivity through our modern notions of being.

These notions as expressed by Premo underscore why I took the approach of creating a mythical super-powered super-steamer that traverses the worlds of the criminal case records and literary texts alike. Although I recognize that we cannot ever fully account for the feelings of the subjects of these texts, this dissertation is an exercise in imagining a world where they get to speak to those feelings themselves. Although I do not know the people who make up these texts, reading about them through the documents has made me feel closer to them, further reaffirming a desire to tell the world about them as well. As this relates to my method, the reader may notice that I refer to people like Jose and Antonio by their first names. This is for many reasons, one being that the names Jose and Antonio were common in the case records themselves, but also because by learning about Jose and Antonio through the cases, I feel the urge to call them by their first names.

⁴⁶ Premo, “As If She Were My Own,” 82.

This feels like an attempt by me to break the 4th wall of researching and writing. Although perhaps a bit unorthodox, I do insert myself into the writing only to convey what the people I write about cannot convey themselves. If the system they lived through and died under can present a narrative that is perhaps the antithesis to their life, why not create counter-narratives that give their spirits the space to exist without those confines. That is where the archival documents and literary texts coalesce as, although the people involved did not breathe the same air, their stories all point to a similar tension—their status as enslaved and black barring them access to intimacy that could not be captured by the hetero-patriarchal modernizing missions of colonial overlords. This too points to frameworks of resistance and survival maybe not being enough to make intimacy the center of our discussions of the enslaved, which is where queer [black] intimacies and the intimacy of knowing is born, two frameworks born in the threshold locations between resistance and survival and the historical and literary. Maybe in these spaces a new type of freedom is defined. I will leave that to the reader to decide as we embark on our ocean travel.

To wrap up this section, I have shown how que(e)rying historical documents and literary texts reveals queer [black] intimacies and an intimacy of knowing among the texts' subjects. Although some of the figures discussed in this project are not necessarily queer, the term queer itself, again, is used to underline the logic of disrupting the meanings created by the archival documents that I read. Beyond that,

queer also becomes a way to move away from what has been seen as “normal,” that which is in service to solidifying hetero-patriarchal power. This is where que(e)rying becomes important as it offers a pathway to identifying what has been marked as normal. We can think of que(e)rying as working in tandem with reading with and against the grain of the archive as these processes engage what is present in archives while also considering alternative perspectives left outside of them. Thus, my creation of counter-narratives to the ones presented via the criminal case records is an exercise in que(e)rying the archive by reading with and against the grain of the documents to consider what is there (or the colonial common sense of it) and what is potentially silenced, such as the queer intimacies and intimacy of knowing fomented among misunderstood people.

Overview of Chapters

Now that our super-steamer has waded us through contextual waters, we can now get a lay of the land ahead. In chapter 1, I look at a criminal case record from 1800s Colombia. The case was brought against Jose Eusebio Rodriguez who was charged with kidnapping and seducing Indigenous girls and women. In this instance, I argue that Jose’s status as black and enslaved contributed to the narrative of him being dangerous, violent, and adulterous. This is confounded with his alleged victims being Indigenous girls and women. As such, there is a shift from thinking about gender as a means of building resistance movements among enslaved people to gender being conflated with needing to protect the honor of women. We see this

in the record as the procuradors of the case relied on ideas of virginity and intimacy as sacred for women and on tropes of Indigenous people as passive to contend that Jose, as a black enslaved man, took advantage of these things to “sate his own appetite.”⁴⁷ Thus, the narrative established via the case is that, not only are enslaved black men dangerous and lascivious, but they are also unable to coexist with their Indigenous neighbors because of it. My counter-narrative challenges this idea by offering a different perspective on the relationship between black and Indigenous people. It harkens to Olivella’s *Chango* as I consider his proposition that, for the Muntu to liberate themselves, they must also deal with the displacement and exploitation of Amerindians.

In chapter 2, our super-steamer takes us to Mallorca, Spain, where I analyze a criminal case record from the 1600s. In this case, Pedro Andres Coll, a 16-year-old Spanish teen is accused of *pecado nefando de sodomia*⁴⁸ with Antonio Joseph, a 30-something year old enslaved black man. In this chapter, I explore how the Holy Inquisition of Spain encouraged and instilled an environment of surveillance, one that saw royal subjects and others living in the kingdom snitching on themselves and their neighbors for acts seen as immoral. This ranged from adultery and theft to

⁴⁷ Direct translation from document “saciar su depravado apetito,” Archivo General de la Nación, 943.

⁴⁸ [nefarious sin of sodomy].

nonnormative sex and violence against others. With this in mind, I suggest that the narrative established via the case is one similar to that of the case from Colombia—that black enslaved people were seen as sexually deviant, more than likely violent, and capable of causing chaos in their quotidian lives and at the systemic level. This is seen in the record as Antonio and Pedro’s neighbors appear before the court remarking on the heresy started by the principal witness Juan Foyos. Although many could not confirm if what he said actually happened or was “true,” many of them still aired on the side of condemning the action. As I argue in the chapter, this is made possible by the surveillance and moral order established by the Inquisition. In response to this, I construct a counter-narrative that reimagines the alleged encounter between Pedro and Antonio as a potential meeting between two people who needed each other for closeness. I rely here on O’Hara’s play, specifically the relationship between TJ and Hammet as they seemed to need each other for similar reasons. This is a culminating moment in the dissertation as Antonio and Jose meet in the confines of these pages to contend with the idea of what it meant for them to be black and enslaved and accused of varying sexual crimes.

In chapter 3, our counter-narrative driven ocean travel comes to a head as I analyze slave ship diagrams and literary texts to show how captives relied on the bonds fomented in sex segregated holds to resist their commodification and subsequent enslavement. The texts that I look at are a diagram of the slave ship *Marie-Seraphique*, Robert O’Hara’s *Insurrection: Holding History*, Juan Francisco

Manzano's autobiography and poems, and Manuel Zapata Olivella's *Chango, el gran putas*. The axis of gender becomes less important as we dive into the literary texts; however, they do reaffirm certain ideas about what it means to be a "man" or "woman." In some instances, we see the confluence of the two as the gender binary was not enough to define the subjectivity of the text's main characters. The main purpose of this chapter is to wallow just a chapter longer in the theoretical and methodological parameters of my dissertation and also to offer some examples of how other scholars have constructed counter-narratives of their own in service of allowing black people to speak in the first person for themselves. This includes discussion of Venus from Hartman's "Two Acts" and archival traces of two males from the *Marie-Seraphique* who were recorded as running away on the same day from the same place. Looking at these documents in tandem not only offers a space for black people to speak for themselves, but it also emphasizes the power of intimacy in cultivating bonds that sustained captives at varying points in their trajectories. It is in this spirit that I move our super-powered super-steamer forward—onward to the shores of the San Juan River flowing between different Indigenous communities and mining fields in the Choco region of Colombia.

Chapter 1: *Robar y Seducir*, The Case of Jose Eusebio Rodriguez

Not to be a hedonist but. pleasure IS the whole point. we are made for pleasure. humans have not survived out of spite or sheer grit. we live for pleasure. we're made to fill our bellies w delicious food, to nap in soft grass, to touch each other in joy and comfort.

*@Kennedy__Quinn, 8/3/2023 on Twitter (now known as "X")*⁴⁹

This tweet may be from 2023, but I want to use it as a way to ground our super-powered super-steamer travel to the shores of the Choco region in Colombia.

In this chapter, I explore what happens when pleasure, or intimacy, becomes criminalized and aids in painting a picture of one man, Jose Eusebio Rodriguez, as violent, dangerous, and adulterous. This chapter will question, and by extension, craft a counter-narrative that reimagines Jose's alleged crimes as moments of seeking out pleasure. What if we reconsidered Jose's presence in the mountains near Noanama as him running away in an attempt to nap in soft grass with a desire to touch others in joy and comfort?

As this chapter will show, access to these kinds of pleasures or intimacies was limited for enslaved black people (and arguably other colonial subjects who were not white, male, and straight). By que(e)rying the document, I suggest that, as opposed to Jose being at odds with the Indigenous inhabitants that he encountered,

⁴⁹ A note on the epigraph: I include the tweet as a way to ground the chapter because, without straying from the goals of my dissertation, I am also implicitly pointing to how our modern notions/understandings of intimacy, joy, and pleasure have their beginnings in the colonial period. Its use here is not to amplify or condone the other tweets of the user I quoted. I only seek to speak to the contents of the specific one mentioned here.

both Jose and the inhabitants were navigating similar terrains of unfreedom. Navigating those terrains brought the groups in close proximity to each other, thus allowing for queer intimacies and an intimacy of knowing to unfold, intimacies that brought the groups closer in their pursuit of freedom. The narrative established by the case is that the interactions black and Indigenous people had were heavily mediated by the law and religion and relied on the prevailing ideas of enslaved black people as not human, property to be owned, and commodities to be controlled and Indigenous people as docile, passive, and loyal to the crown. My counter-narrative reimagines Jose and the Indigenous people as relying on the intimacy of knowing between the groups as a way to ensure that both gained permissible access to pleasure and connection.

We see the influence of religion and the law via the case as the prosecutor of the case goes on to charge Jose with crimes that aligned with the *Siete Partidas*.⁵⁰ Jose's defense uses these same set of laws to argue for his innocence. It is clear from these aspects of the case that Jose was assumed as guilty from the start with no space to prove his innocence. This is again exacerbated by his status as enslaved. As I mentioned in the Introduction, race and religion were often conflated during this

⁵⁰ The *Siete Partidas* were seven statutes first arranged during the rule of Alfonso X of Castile in the thirteenth century and were later used as the backbone of the legislative body within Spain and its colonies.

time to reaffirm the sociopolitical status of enslaved people and royal subjects alike. The basis for how people of African descent were viewed can be attributed to the ideas that colonial powers held about Africa.

Although related to Englishmen, Winthrop D. Jordan notes how Africa becomes an imagined place for English traders (I would argue this is true for the Portuguese, Spanish, and other powers as well). Jordan shows how the idea of people of African descent being closely linked to apes or beasts stems from the philosophical understandings of people such as Aristotle who suggested “newe monsters” were born at the “scarce watering places” found in Africa. According to Jordan and Aristotle, apes and black people are related through black peoples conjugal visits with “some unknown beasts.”⁵¹ Thus he argues that Englishmen, by establishing a sexual link between apes and black people, were able to reify their sentiments of African people being lascivious or beastly people.

These ideas of black people have led black scholars to creating counter-archival projects that address this human/nonhuman divide. This is also in service to addressing the silences, or null values, found in slavery’s archive. We can think of the work of Jenny Sharpe, Robert F. Reid Pharr, and Katherine McKittrick. These four scholars craft archival and archival adjacent projects that move beyond

⁵¹ Winthrop D. Jordan, Christopher Leslie Brown, and Peter H. Wood, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812*, 2nd ed. (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

white/European and even Judeo-Christian notions of the “human” that contend with the displacement and enslavement of black people, particularly in the afterlife of slavery. Sharpe does through conceptualizing of “immaterial archives” those that are attuned to “affective memory” when perusing violent images of slavery.⁵² For Pharr, this looks like reconsidering what is human through the creation of a “posthumanist” agenda and archival practice.⁵³ ⁵⁴ McKittrick pays attention to the “imaginative configurations” in her text to connect black women’s geographies and geographies of domination. She argues that by doing so we are able to better explore and understand how the definitions of space and place differ for black populations as they have sometimes been treated as “ungeographic” people.⁵⁵

These texts more generally ground how I conceptualize the arguments put forth in this chapter. That being that black enslaved people were dislocated from their “homes” (i.e., Africa) and thereby disconnected from ways of being that did not

⁵² Jenny Sharpe, *Immaterial Archives: An African Diaspora Poetics of Loss* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020).

⁵³ Robert F. Reid-Pharr, *Archives of Flesh: African America, Spain, and Post-Humanist Critique* (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

⁵⁴ Reid-Pharr conceives of the posthumanist agenda and archival practice in which one becomes human by “transcending bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether.” In relation to the work of Sylvia Wynter, Pharr takes to task her preposition to rescue us from the “stunningly calcified” understanding of the human, one that requires a linear trajectory of how far we have come as a species.

⁵⁵ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2006).

match with the budding system of white heteropatriarchy in the New World. This new system conceived of them as doubly animal like and property to be controlled, thus instilling ideas about them that permeated through society.

Jose was arguably an “ungeographic” person as, by his own omission, he was travelling through many parts of the Choco region after he ran away from an incident he did not want to be punished for. This forthcoming chapter then can be thought of as an exercise in understanding how Jose and his alleged crimes become known through the historical record and, in contrast, how we might consider the footprints of his life differently outside the framework of enslaved black people being seen as other, or not human. The broader narrative established by the criminal case record is that Jose crossed the bounds of what was considered “appropriate” interactions with Indigenous people. This included allegedly entering their villages, stealing from them, kidnapping them, and in one instance, sexually assaulting them.

This narrative was perpetuated by the procuradors of the case as they relied on ideas about virginity and intimacy as sacred for women and on tropes of Indigenous people as passive to contend that Jose as a black enslaved man took advantage of these things to “sate his own desires.” Thus, I argue that Jose’s means for achieving intimacy were limited by his status as enslaved and also by the characterizations of Black people during the time. This read of Jose requires a

reformulation of the events and a close reading that illuminates the potential intimacies between Jose and the Indigenous people he encountered.

This is not an exercise in absolving Jose of his alleged crimes; on the contrary, it is an exercise in exploring how criminal case records and the structure of society during the colonial period were used to construct meaning. In this particular case, Jose's framing as dangerous, violent, and lascivious emphasizes the audacity of his alleged interactions in the eyes of the people that "caught" him, that he would dare to seek out companionship or intimacy, especially among Indigenous people.

With this in mind, some of the central questions of this chapter are as follows: How does Jose come to be known as a "boogeyman" of sorts in Noanama and surrounding areas? How do the laws and colonial structure of the time influence how meanings about Jose and his crimes are constructed? And more, what does moving away from these preconceived ideas about Jose (and enslaved black people in general) offer us in constructing a counter-narrative that reimagines these allegations against Jose as a product of the time and not necessarily Jose's own volitions? Although I seek to answer these questions in this chapter, it also seeks to form a snippet of Jose's biography. Although there is not much more to be known about him in the national archives of Colombia in Bogota, there are other things to be said about how a story of his alleged crimes fits into the larger fabric of intimacy and desire across the African diaspora. Echoing the methods established in the

Introduction, I turn to literary methods and critical fabulation because, as Hartman states:

By playing with and rearranging the basic elements of the story, by re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view, I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done.⁵⁶

It is in this spirit that I move forward with analyzing the case against Jose to disrupt the meanings it created in service to imaging Jose in a different light, cultivating an intimacy of knowing between him and the people of Noanama. I will refer briefly to Manuel Zapata Olivella's mythic history, *Chango, el gran putas*, to construct a counter-narrative that reconsiders the interactions between Jose and the Indigenous people as not in opposition to each other but instead aligned in their goals for freedom from and intimacy under colonial order.

By reading these two together, I intend to show how black people have attempted to tell a different story about "blackness" and the relationship between black and Indigenous people during slavery and in the African diaspora more broadly. As Olivella's mythic shows, the story of who black people (and arguably Indigenous people) are is often made under dominating systems of power. This is relevant in the case of Jose, too, as he stood trial in the Royal Court of Novita, a

⁵⁶ Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

prevailing enforcer of power throughout the colonial period. These ideas, read through the lens of desire and intimacy, allow us to fabulate a story of Jose that allows his specter to speak from the first person. It offers another perspective that differs from the image of him as a menacing “boogeyman.”

The chapter will go as follows: an introduction to who Jose was, followed by discussion of the crimes he was accused of committing and how the case produces a narrative. Following this, I consider how the defense of Jose presents a narrative different to that one. The chapter will close with our super-steamer aiding us in construction of a counter-narrative, one that reimagines the relationship between Jose and the Indigenous people as one that allotted both access to an intimacy not permitted by the law and religion. Onward to our introduction to Jose and exploring the contours of the case.

Archival Tracings of a Criminal Past:

Jose Eusebio Rodriguez ‘un esclavizado de Don Francisco Jose Arboleda’

The year is 1803 and a criminal case is brought against an enslaved person in Novita, a province in Choco, Colombia. The enslaved person, Jose Eusebio Rodriguez, was accompanied by his lawyer, Don Ignacio Hurtado, and his owner, Don Francisco Jose Arboleda. Before getting into the details of his alleged crimes, let us first be acquainted with who Jose Eusebio Rodriguez was. According to the details given in the record, Jose was not originally enslaved by Arboleda. When asked who he was, where he came from, and who his dad and mom were, Jose responded:

[ES] En que ofrecio decir verdad en quanto supiese, y le fuese preguntado, y siendolo con arreglo a la primera como se llamaba dijo: que llama Josef Eusevio Rodriguez: y responde = A la segunda preguntado quien fué su padre y su madre, dice, que Jacinto Valdez, por ser esclavo de defunto Don Pedro Baldez, y su madre Susana de Afana esclava también del sitado defunto y que al declarante lo vendieron de pequeña edad, y que en el dia es esclavo de Don Francisco Josef Arboleda, vecino de la ciudad de Popayán y que su asistencia ha sido en la mina de dicho su amo en Timbiquí, jurisdicción de la provincia de Micay (page 943 of document).⁵⁷

[EN] He swore to tell the truth as far as he knew. When asked first how he was called, he said: that he is called José Eusevio Rodríguez. In response to the second question, regarding who his father and mother were, he said that his father was Jacinto Valdez, who was a slave of the deceased Don Pedro Baldez, and his mother was Susana de Afana, also a slave of the aforementioned deceased. He was sold at a young age, and he is currently a slave of Don Francisco José Arboleda, a resident of the city of Popayán, and his service has been in the mine of his master in Timbiquí, within the jurisdiction of the province of Micay.

When asked why he left the mine in Timbiquí, Jose went on to say:

[ES] Y preguntandole porque se havia huido y que tiempo hace, responde, que un ano poco mas o menos que se huyo con el motivo de haversele hundido en la mar un seybo cargado de maiz, y que temeroso del castigo hiso la fuga, y se vino al Rio de Anchicaya, jurisdicción de la Provincia del Raposo, que alli persevero algunos dias y se paro a Dagua, y que por el sitio de Bendiciones Calima abajo se vino de esta provincia y que junto con el Rosalio Rodriguez y otros conocidos se paro a las playas de la Mar de esta jurisdiccion en donde se mantubo algun tiempo pezcando que de aqui paro a la jurisdicción de Baudo en donde incurrio en el primer delito extraiendo del poder de su marido robada a la muger Yndio Cheipto, con cuiο motivo saliò el casique del aquel pueblo en su seguimiento y habiendolo encontrado le quitò la yndia y que el declarante se vino a su saraga, y se acompaño con un negro llamado Felipe, simarron que se tiene noticia ser esclavo de Dona Rosalia.

[EN] And when asked why he had fled and how long ago it was, he responded that he had fled about a year ago, or a little more, due to a cargo of corn being lost at sea. Fearing punishment, he escaped and went to the Rio de Anchicaya, in the jurisdiction of the Province of Raposo. There, he stayed for a few days before going to Dagua. From there, he traveled down the Bendiciones Calima area, left

⁵⁷ Archivo General de la Nación, p. 943.

the province, and, together with Rosalio Rodríguez and others he knew, went to the beaches of the sea within this jurisdiction, where he spent some time fishing. From there, he went to the jurisdiction of Baudo, where he committed a crime by stealing from the wife of an Indian named Cheipto. As a result, the chief of that town pursued him, and, having found him, took the Indian woman back. The declarant then went to his refuge and joined with a black man named Felipe, a maroon who is known to be a slave of Doña Rosalía.

There is no direct indication of what year Jose was born, or at what age he was sold to Don Francisco Arboleda because, as he stated during the trial, he was sold at a young age. Although there is not a lot of information readily available about Jose's background, Richard Bolaños and Gerardo Andrade Gonzalez have written about the Arboleda family and their quest for wealth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Andrade Gonzalez discusses the Arboleda family and the wealth they incurred over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through multiple ventures.⁵⁸ According to his article, the Arboleda family was one of the wealthiest mine and land-owning families in Popayan.⁵⁹ Francisco Jose (Jose E.'s owner) inherited some mines and estates from his father in 1797 in the jurisdiction of Popayan (six enslaved people, 213 cattle, twenty-three beasts? [bestias]), Reposo, and Caloto (234 enslaved people).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Gerardo Andrade González, "El Negro: Factor Esencial de La Economía Colonial En La Gobernación de Popayán Del Nuevo Reino de Granada," *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 120 (1995): 35–66.

⁵⁹ González, "El Negro," 47.

⁶⁰ González, "El Negro," 49–50.

Bolaños writes about the Arboleda’s pursuit for land in Quilichao, Colombia, between 1750 and 1787.⁶¹ According to Bolanos, the Arboleda family engaged in disputes with the free people of Quilichao as they fought to maintain control of their land. He describes the conflict between them in two processes, the first involving the free people fighting against the Arboleda family for property rights over the lands they were occupying and also about the Arboleda family’s use of the Mochique (or Monchique) mountains. The second process saw the Arboleda’s banding together with the town-council of Caloto, a neighboring area, to try and take control of some mines in Quilichao and also to infringe upon the political autonomy of the free people living in Quilichao.⁶²

The Arboledas and the town-council of Caloto had an interest in Quilichao so that they could exploit the use of the natural resources in the area. They also took advantage of the fact that Quilichao was newly forming (having come together sometime around 1740), and, in the words of Francisco Antonio Arboleda (the father of Francisco Jose Arboleda, Jose’s master) in his plan for Quilichao, at the time there was a grand population of people existing without public officials and owner estates. The free people there were also engaging in the buying and selling of enslaved

⁶¹ Richard Bolaños, “Accediendo a la tenencia de la tierra: Integración política de los libres de San Antonio de Quilichao en la jurisdicción de Caloto, provincia de Popayán (1740-1808),” *El Taller de la Historia* 8, no. 8 (June 15, 2016): 169–93, <https://doi.org/10.32997/2382-4794-vol.8-num.8-2016-1337>.

⁶² Bolaños, “Accediendo a la tenencia de la tierra,” 7.

people and gold. This was a problem to Francisco Antonio because, even though they had “plaza, calles e Iglesia” they operated outside of the law and religious order.⁶³

This is interesting to consider given that the town was made up of majority white free people, with mestizos, mulattos, and “negros” making up a majority of the population.⁶⁴ The mixed populations are said to have come about as a result of Indigenous, black, and white people intermingling upon arriving in the area and looking for opportunities. I mention this briefly here to provide some background about the Arboleda family and also to divulge more about how relationships were being formed between different groups. This context may also help us understand how black and Indigenous people were interacting with each other during this time.

This brings us to the description of the document and the classification of Jose’s crimes by archivists. They use the term “seducción” as a way to classify his crimes. The use of *seducción* in this way becomes particularly interesting when we consider the social fabric of Noanama and the Choco more broadly. According to the description of the record in the “Negros y Esclavos” catalog at AGN,

⁶³ Bolaños, “Accediendo a la tenencia de la tierra,” 7.

⁶⁴ Bolaños, “Accediendo a la tenencia de la tierra,” 10.

[ES] José Eusebio Rodríguez, esclavo de Francisco José Arboleda, vecino de Popayan, causa que se le siguió por seducción de mujeres casadas y solteras y otros delitos con el bello sexo.⁶⁵

[EN] Jose Eusebio Rodriguez, slave of Francisco Jose Arboleda, a resident of Popayan, was charged with seducing married and single women and other crimes with the fairer sex.

398	12	1803. JOSE EUSEBIO RODRIGUEZ, esclavo de FRANCISCO JOSE ARBOLEDA, vecino de Popayán, causa que se le siguió por seducción de mujeres casadas y solteras y otros delitos con el bello sexo.....	933-994
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Figure 3. Screenshot from catalog entry at Archivo General de la Nación.

The reason for showing the exact wording of the description is to point to the logics of archival work. The description of a document is meant to give you a general idea of what it is about. My first thought reading it was that perhaps Jose upset the husbands of some married women which warranted his arrest. However, as expected, upon reading the document, the details paint a more sinister picture of an enslaved man allegedly hellbent on satiating his own desires. Surprisingly enough, the description from the catalog departs slightly from the description given on the first page of the document.⁶⁶ The first page of the document reads,

⁶⁵ Entry for Jose Eusebio Rodriguez, Archivo General de la Nación.

⁶⁶ I can only assume that the description from the catalog was made by an archivist, while the description on the first page of the document was probably made by someone privy to the case.

“Criminal contra Jose Eusevio, esclavo de Don Francisco Arboleda, por rovor de mugeres casadas y solteras: estrupos y heridas.”⁶⁷

The two words of interest for me here are *estrupos* and *heridas*. According to *diccionario de Autoridades*, *estrupe* could mean

[ES] Concubito y ayuntamiento ilicito y forzado con virgen o doncella. Es del Latino *Struprum*, que significa esto mismo. Algunos escriben Estupro [...] Pecar con soltera es simple fonicacion: con casada adulterio, con doncella virgen estupro, con parienta incesto, con persona Religiosa y dedicada a Dios sacrilegio o adulterio espiritual [...] Que si la castidad nos defiende del estupro y adulterio voluntario, mejor nos preserva del incesto casual.⁶⁸

[EN] Concubitus and illicit and forced marriage with a virgin or maiden. It is from the Latin *Stuprum*, which means the same thing. Some write Statutory [...] Sinning with a single woman is simple fornication, with a married woman, adultery, with a virgin, rape, with a relative, incest, with a religious person dedicated to God, sacrilege or spiritual adultery [...] That if chastity defends us from statutory rape and voluntary adultery, it better protects us from casual incest.

What this definition suggests is that intimate acts were regulated through religious or Catholic norms. Concubinage and illicit/forced marriages were seen as similar crimes to “sinning with a single woman,” adultery, and the rape of a virgin. Jose being found with a young girl who was bathed in blood signals to this imaginary of “virgins” needing to be protected or men needing to be punished for infringing on the virgin’s “purity.” Based on this, I suggest that the court does not necessarily punish Jose for assaulting a young girl; on the contrary, they instead punish him for

⁶⁷ Archivo General de la Nación, 933.

⁶⁸ *Diccionario de Autoridades (1726-1739)*, “Estupro,” Tomo III (1732), accessed August 6, 2024, <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html>.

raping a virgin, breaking the religious norms around sex and intimacy. What I am trying to get at here is that the age of Paula was perhaps of no concern to the court. Whether she was 10, 11, or 21, she was a virgin whose “purity” was infringed upon. This begs the question: Is Jose tried for sexual violence or for breaking Catholic norms around sexual desire? My inkling is the latter, as the ages of the victims do not really seem relevant in the grand scheme of the case. In fact, outside of Paula’s body being described as between the ages of ten and eleven, age is not mentioned again except when witnesses took the oath.

So, not only do we see an attempt to paint Jose a certain way, but we also see an attempt at the archive to read Paula as a passive victim. Here again we see how racial hierarchies are used to reaffirm sexual hierarchies through judicial processes. Scholars such as Tamar Herzog have written about how porous these processes can be even as they were presented as stable and reliable.⁶⁹ Herzog helps to clarify how this allows for the blurring of lines of power by legal vernacular. It was not necessarily about the victim, it was about reifying power by criminalizing what was seen as not normal.

⁶⁹ Tamar Herzog, *Upholding Justice: Society, State, and the Penal System in Quito*, Illustrated ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); see also work by Rebecca J. Scott.

Confounded with Jose’s status as an enslaved person, it becomes clear that the boundary between intimacy and criminal is thin, and this is further exacerbated by the charge of “heridas,” which according to *diccionario autoridades* means

[ES] Metaphoricamente se dice de qualquiera cosa que lastíma y hiere el ánimo. Latín. . . . Estas y otras semejantes consideraciones causan un remordimiento de ánimo, que llega a la memoria, y dexa una señal de la herída.⁷⁰

[EN] Metaphorically, it is said of anything that hurts and wounds the spirit. Latin. . . . These and other similar considerations cause a remorse of mind, which reaches the memory, and leaves a sign of the wound.

So, Jose is also being tried for hurting or wounding “the spirit” of the people he is said to have harmed and perhaps, by extension, their spouses and family members. The charge of heridas also seems to be a result of Jose’s alleged attack against Prudencio el Pomenyo, an action that wounded the spirit of Prudencio as he was just trying to cure a dog before Jose attacked him.⁷¹ Again, it is reaffirmed that Jose’s actions were heinous because of their disregard for Catholic order and the spirit and minds of his victims.

Estrupos and heridas are already beyond the scope of what the description from the catalog offered. I pointed out the description and what the document actually included because they are communicating different things. Not only that, as testimonies such as Manuel Villysa’s show, Jose’s alleged crimes went beyond

⁷⁰ *Diccionario de Autoridades (1726-1739)*, “Herida,” Tomo IV (1734), accessed August 6, 2024, <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html>.

⁷¹ Archivo General de la Nación, 939.

robbing and seduction; they included rape and assault too. This is not meant to be a critique of the description. On the contrary, this is to again highlight what we cannot know about certain histories, even after reading the documents that are housed in what is seen as the holders of them (i.e., archives). Although the descriptions of both the catalog and document point to wrong-doing by Jose, an initial question that arose for me as I read the first part of the document: Were the encounters Jose had with some of the women consensual, and was he tried because he was enslaved and black and acting on his desires? Further, the retelling of Jose's actions led to another question: How was Jose able to accomplish multiple crimes in one day? And more, how is it that he evaded as many townspeople as he did and continued to commit crimes in the same area?

We can return to Gonzalez's article here as it gives us a better idea of what the social composition of the Choco was at the time, highlighting that, by around 1775, Novita had about 7,024 enslaved black people living there.⁷² His article also provides numbers of enslaved people divided by sex, state, and marital status. According to the table, in 1778, there were 911 married males and 2,143 single males in the Choco. As it relates to females, there were 905 married and 1,797 single, bringing the grand total of data collected for 5,756 people.⁷³ These figures

⁷² González, "El Negro," 42.

⁷³ González, "El Negro," 43.

offer a glimpse as to at what rate intimate relationships were being formed among enslaved people at the time. If we think again about the case, these numbers suggest that Jose was potentially part of this larger group of single people. It wouldn't be too far off to suggest that the numbers were skewed the way they were because there were not many opportunities for enslaved people to get married, so much so that, when these events did happen, they reflected a grand, celebratory moment not just for the couple but for community members also. If we think about this context in the case of Jose, we can better understand what the image of him as a seductress and adulterer is based on. They potentially stem from the lack of enslaved marriages in the area and the coyness or inherent fear of Indigenous women. According to witness testimonies, Jose was thirsty, and the Indigenous women were kind and fearful, thus creating a situation where Jose naturally could not help but take advantage of the women because of his own lack of access to intimate relationships with other enslaved people.⁷⁴

This ties back to the central idea of this chapter and my dissertation more broadly—that criminal proceedings were an avenue for reifying tropes of people of African descent and ideas of intimacy, purity, and womanhood, therefore rendering

⁷⁴ If it is not evident in my tone, this is said facetiously. By writing this way, I am also trying to emphasize the absurdity of some of the claims made against Jose.

these ideas almost as a legal fact.⁷⁵ Further, my questions alone are also meant to highlight what we cannot know about the archives and the histories they hold. Because even having the 100-something page record does not sufficiently address the perspective of the man on trial, Jose. As readers, we are invited to take the case at face value because it was a criminal proceeding or a presentation of legal fact, and even that is complicated as you begin to read the entire document.

A fuller picture of Jose and his case can be painted as we begin to understand how language is being used to construct meaning. For example, what is *seducción* in this instance, and why is it being criminalized? What is implied by referring to women as “el bello sexo,” and what other crimes accompany seduction? Given that Jose was enslaved, the meanings of these words become heightened as he is already marked as criminal or other by way of his status. As such, this chapter examines some of the witness accounts of Jose’s crime in an effort to explore why Jose’s actions were marked as criminal. As stated earlier in the chapter, I argue that Jose’s means of achieving intimacy were heavily mediated by his status as an enslaved person. This potentially contributed to Jose being seen as capable of satisfying his own desires through coercion, violence, and the threat of death.

⁷⁵ See Zeb Tortorici, *Sins Against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Carolina Giraldo Botero, “Esclavos sodomitas en Cartagena colonial. Hablando del pecado nefando,” *Historia Crítica*, no. 20 (December 1, 2000): 171–78, <https://doi.org/10.7440/histcrit20.2000.06>.

The Crimes, the Trial, and the Subsequent Narrative Produced

The trial begins with a story about a runaway enslaved man robbing two Indigenous men of their clothing and subsistence. These two men handed over what they had because, according to them, they were naturally afraid of Jose because he was a runaway and also allegedly brandishing weapons and threatening to kill them. They also stated that he took off in a canoe that had their women and daughters in it, forcing them to bring their food and beds with them as they left on the canoe. According to the Corregidor Don Juan de Funes y Garcia, who was delivering this testimony on behalf of the men, Jose, retiring immediately, continued on to satiate his depraved appetite.⁷⁶

This story goes on with Funes y Garcia relaying that he ordered Manuel Jose del Castillo to be given the necessary commission to capture Jose. He also enlisted the help of Bautista Abaria (sometimes spelled Aberea) for Castillo, as Abaria spoke Spanish well, was rational, and also experienced the first theft of Jose, as Jose allegedly robbed Abaria's wife. This idea about the rationality and well-spokenness of the Indigenous people is repeated throughout the trial. Castillo and Abaria were granted access to the support of neighboring districts where they thought Jose could be found. They were ordered to search for him until it could be verified that he had

⁷⁶ Archivo General de la Nación, back of page 934. [Retirandose inmediatamente seguia a saciar su depravado apetito por lo que debia de mandar y mando.]

been imprisoned. This statement by Funes y Garcia was signed off on without the presence of a notary on April 9th, 1802.

The first piece of testimony by the corregidor of Noanama highlights the Spanish language skills and rationality of the Indigenous men. This affirmation of rationality and well-spokenness appears in other testimonies given on behalf of Indigenous people in service to affirming their own claims to “truth” as it relates to naming the crimes Jose was accused of committing. Another interesting aspect of this first testimony is that it provides the initial framing of how Jose was seen by the people of Noanama and neighboring areas. As the corregidor’s statement makes clear, Jose was instantly seen as dangerous, violent, and perhaps even a bit egocentric. These things, combined with the rationality of his Indigenous troops, emphasized the necessity of needing to capture Jose.

Although the capture and imprisonment of Jose was of high priority, Castillo and his commission returned on April 12th to inform the corregidor that Jose was not found. And then, on the 1st of May in Noanama, Jose was accused of committing another crime—this time by a man by the name of Baptista Badoseno, who appeared at ten in the evening to inform the corregidor that Jose had entered his home that day, threatening him with death and forcefully taking the “yndia” Joaquina Dauci from her absent husband. In front of everyone present, Jose allegedly ordered Joaquina to load dishes onto a colt (or rack?) that he was sitting on, and for Joaquina to get on board, too. Fearing the others may not be able to help

her and that Jose might take her life, Joaquina did not try to resist. After Jose took off with Joaquina, Bandoseno, the person relaying this information, immediately went to present his complaint against Jose to the corregidor. This then led to another search for Jose, this time with the inclusion of Tomas Fuentes, a “doctrinero” who was asked to bring the most “rational” Indians for the purpose of capturing and imprisoning Jose.⁷⁷

While on this search, the commission did end up finding Joaquina. One witness, Antonio Hortis, alleged that she was found at the bottom of a cliff. He recalled that Jose supposedly took a knife to Joaquina’s throat and threatened her if she said anything. Once she noticed that Jose was threatening her because the commission was near, as opposed to making noise, she responded by throwing herself off the cliff onto the rocks of the beach. Once at the bottom of the cliff, the commission was able to retrieve her. They also noticed that Jose stayed near the top of the cliff, hiding in the bushes so as not to be “caught.” This is only a few of the many crimes Jose was accused of committing. This chapter takes to task what meanings are produced through this trial about Jose and enslaved black people more generally.

As stated earlier, some of these testimonies report that Jose committed a few crimes in a given day, which could be read as having been nearly impossible

⁷⁷ Archivo General de la Nación, back of page 935.

logistically. Along with one of his initial crimes of robbing and scaring the indigenous men under Funes y Garcia's command, some other crimes included the robbing of the wife of an Indigenous tributary named Chepito and the sexual assault of a young girl, who I assume is affectionately called "la chinita" Paula. Jose was corralled by a group of people, including the corregidor of Noanama, Funes y Garcia, the mayor of the town, Don Domingo Feguiza, and the "Indians of his command," along with other residents of Noanama and neighboring areas such as Manuel Villyasa and Melchor Guiro.⁷⁸

This testimony also reveals some dynamics about gender as the allegations about la chinita were one of the crimes he was formally charged for. He was not charged for the theft of Chepito's wife; however, in thinking about the contours of the case, this allegation reads more as a plot to further justify needing to capture Jose. His alleged actions were even more heinous because he violated their wives and children. If we think about the intimacy of knowing here, Jose was essentially ostracized for disrupting the harmony of Noanama, a place that seemed to be grounded in a strong affinity and care among its inhabitants. It was not about whether or not he did what he did, his mere presence sparked suspicion and triggered an intimate network of protective male leaders. Their task was to rid their community of the differently painted nuisance. Jose had to be removed, not just

⁷⁸ Another possible last name for Melchor, "Luiro."

from Noanama, but the surrounding area more generally. This is evident in the testimonies from the case as the people responsible for “catching” Jose came from a myriad of places, emphasizing the stakes of his imprisonment.

According to the Corregidor Funes y Garcia, he commissioned one of the Indian tributaries of his command, Melchor Guiro, to join in on the search for Jose. I am especially interested in this testimony because it is given by Funes y Garcia, which could be for many reasons, one being Guiro was not able to appear on the given day. However, his testimony was entered on the grounds that he was “de competente rasonilidad y que habla el castellano con bastante propiedad.”⁷⁹ Funes y Garcia making this known before giving Melchor’s statement highlights some aspects of who could be seen as a “good” witness. Especially given that Melchor was Indigenous, the inclusion of the statement, although not out of the ordinary, still signals that Melchor’s testimony should be received and valued because he spoke the colonizer’s tongue well and was competent.

In thinking about how the trial against Jose constructs a narrative about blackness, we see this in the trial in Melchor’s testimony when he was essentially asked to confirm that he agreed with the imprisonment of Jose—not if he knew the actions to be true or saw the actions himself, just if he could corroborate that there

⁷⁹ [Melchor’s testimony was taken on the grounds that he was competent and spoke really good Castellano]. Archivo General de la Nación, back of page 940.

was a search for him. Melchor agreed and finished his testimony confirming that he joined the search with Manuel Villysa, “mas yndios,” and Fulano Rodriguez, who was accompanied by his nephew, the two of them not even knowing the names of Melchor and the rest. Again, this testimony shows that multiple parties were invested in the arrest of Jose, so much so that people who had no relation to each other or who did not care to know the names of each other banded together to ensure Jose’s capture. It was not a matter of if he actually committed a crime, it was a matter of if people wanted him gone. As I say elsewhere in this chapter, this approach to legal processes automatically marks Jose as guilty just by way of him being black and enslaved. Consistently in the case, it seems as though Jose was punished for disrupting a knowing among the people—that enslaved black people stayed in their place, which was not the Indigenous villages. To combat another enslaved person stumbling into their space, it is almost as if Jose had to be captured to reaffirm the separation of the groups.

The plan to capture Jose works to construct an image of Jose as dangerous, deceitful, and perhaps not “Spanish” enough. These views are not constructed in a vacuum, as Spanish colonization during the time tirelessly established a social system that saw both black and Indigenous people as subjugated populations. Sharp’s description of the towns having many married couples and almost equal ratios of men to women highlights the heightened sense of fear they may have had seeing an outsider. As the allegations against Jose suggest, his presence in places like

Noanama caused disruption to this social composition as he robbed and took advantage of both single and married women in the village. Not only that, he potentially disturbed the harmony of the village with his mere presence, as it was not common to see black or enslaved people in predominantly Indigenous towns.⁸⁰ Although black people made up a sizable amount of the population in the Choco, it was still uncommon to see them in places such as Noanama. This begs the question of what lengths would the people of the town go to rid themselves of the outsider roaming around, potentially causing trouble.

On May 26, 1802, one witness, Manuel Villyasa, testified to knowing that Jose committed two heinous acts. In relation to these events, the document reads:

[ES] Y que viendo la muger del expresado Villaysa, la embarcación en que hiva el negro y la chinita, bananme bañada de sangre preguntole al negro qual fuese el motivo y le respondio que a que la indiesita se le havia enfermado y con palabras carinosas procuro grangear la voluntad del negro lo uso por caridad y lo otro por ser la indiesita su hayjada y de este modo curarla a que preguntaba que fuè la indiesita, que qual èra la cauza de hallarse de esa suerte, a que respondio que queriendo el negro, tener acto carnal con ella, no hallando el conducto suficiente para el efecto se baliò de la yndustria de meter ambos dedos en aquel conducto estrecho, imposibilitandola sobre manera y de este modo consigio sasiar su apetito poniendola en infelis estado; y responde que segun el cuerpo, y aspecto que de muestra sera en la actualidad tendra de diez a once anos de edad.⁸¹

[EN] And when the wife of the aforementioned Villaysa saw the boat in which the black man and the little Chinese girl were traveling, covered in blood, she asked the black man what the reason was. He answered that the little Indian girl had fallen ill, and with kind words, she tried to win the black man's goodwill; he used it out of charity. The other because the indiesita was his goddaughter and in this way

⁸⁰ Sharp, "The Profitability of Slavery," 23. See also *Beyond Black and Red: African Colonial Relations in Latin America and Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution*.

⁸¹ Archivo General de la Nación, 938–9.

cured her to the questioner who asked how the indiesita was, what was the reason for finding herself in that way, to which she responded that the black man wanted to have a carnal act with her, not finding the conduit sufficient enough for the effect was lost in the industry of putting both fingers in that narrow conduit. Making it extremely difficult for her, he managed to satisfy his desire, leaving her in an unfortunate state; and he responded that, based on her body and appearance, she would currently be about ten or eleven years old.

According to Villyasa, Jose was found on a boat with a young girl (“la chinita”); the girl was bathed in blood, and Jose is also said to have responded to Villysa, telling him that the girl was his goddaughter (“hayjada”) and that she was sick and had essentially seduced him and asked him for his care. The sentence reads, “y le respondio que a que la indiesita se le havia enfermado y con palabras carinosas procuro grangear la voluntad del negro lo uso por caridad.” I wanted to focus on the use of the word “grangear,” in particular, because it seems to emphasize that Jose’s story is that la chinita needed him and wanted him to treat her in the ways that he did. In other words, she was incessant, and Jose’s response is framed as “how could I not?” The most ironic part of it all is that he is said to have responded this way when asked why he was with the girl. She was sick and needed him, and, as a result, he sexually assaulted her by forcing his fingers inside of her, because, of course, his penis did not fit. I’m outlining the details of the witness statement in this way to begin pointing to some of the shock and absurdity that the events described create. It is not absurd to think that one would sexually take advantage of a young person, but the story being told is a confusing one, to say the least. Thus far, it reaffirms that Jose had “sasiar su apetito” and that was only possible by engaging in sexual acts

with this young girl who was said to have needed him. *Diccionario de Autoridades*

(1726-1739) defines grangear as:

[ES] Metafóricamente vale ganar, adquirir o lograr el afecto, voluntad o benevolencia de otro, a fuerza de halagos, caricias o sumisiones.⁸²

[EN] Metaphorically, it means to win, acquire, or achieve the affection, will, or benevolence of another, by force of flattery, caresses, or submissions.

The use of grangear alludes to stereotypes about black men's genitalia while also emphasizing the youth and virginity of the young girl. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, scholars such as Jordan have written about the historical links made by Englishmen between people of African descent and apes. In his work, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, Jordan argues, Englishmen, by establishing a sexual link between apes and black people, were able to reify their sentiments of African people being lascivious or beastly people.

Although Jordan's work does not explicitly cover Colombia or Latin America, the analysis he puts forth resonates with the present case at hand. It is well-known that European nations colluded when scheming together the Transatlantic slave trade. Although Jordan's text focuses on English attitudes, it is not far off to assume that these same ideas permeated in the Spanish Americas at varying degrees as marking black people as "nonhuman," "subhuman," or at the bottom of the

⁸² *Diccionario de Autoridades (1726–1739)*, "Grangear," Tomo IV (1734), accessed May 19, 2025, <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html>.

caste/racial system was integral for colonization to flourish. This is confounded, again, when we consider the displacement of Indigenous people and their subsequent inclusion into Spanish colonial society. This idea about stereotypes related to black people's genitalia and emphasizing the youth and virginity of the young girl also takes us back to the very first page of the document and the crimes of estropos and heridas that Jose was tried for.

As I have stated elsewhere in this chapter, the implications of these crimes work to construct a particular image of Jose and more generally enslaved black people during this time. By looking at them through the lens of desire and intimacy, there is a better idea of how one enslaved man allegedly went about "satiating his appetite," thereby bolstering my argument that his status as second-class and property did not allow for the proper avenues of engaging in consensual closeness. This is not to say Jose potentially committed crimes because he was enslaved, but instead that Jose's status as enslaved limited access to acceptable forms of intimacy and acts of desire. Not only did his status as enslaved limit his access to acceptable forms of intimacy and acts of desire, but it also potentially lent itself to preconceived notions about who Jose was and what actions he was capable of committing.

Guilty Until Proven Otherwise: In Defense of Jose Eusebio Rodriguez

Thus far, what this chapter has shown is that the perceptions of Jose and his alleged crimes were not created in a vacuum. Witness testimonies were given in a context that implicitly—and arguably explicitly—asked them to reaffirm social

boundaries between Indigenous and black people. These social boundaries, informed by Catholic order and Spanish law, had a larger purpose of maintaining order in the colonies. Communities were ordered in a way that made sure the Spanish crown and Catholic church could continue to exploit both Indigenous and Afro-descended people. Although their mobilities were intimately tied in this manner, it is not surprising that there were ruptures in their intercommunal relationships.

The analysis of the trial and witness testimonies is not to absolve Jose of his alleged crimes; rather, the analysis is meant to evoke meanings of blackness, morality, purity, and desire. It is to confront how Catholicism and Spanish law worked together to criminalize and punish -- not the crime, but the meanings that crimes produced or distorted. In the case of Jose, he allegedly arrived at his crimes as a runaway enslaved black person, with his status as enslaved already imposing barriers for what he could and could not do.

At the conclusion of the trial, Jose was sentenced to eight years in a presidio in Cartagena. According to *Diccionario de la lengua española*, a presidio was not necessarily a prison, but a place where people convicted of serious crimes were sent to do labor for the duration of their sentence.⁸³ During his sentencing, the “síndico

⁸³ *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, Edición del Tricentenario, “Presidio,” accessed August 28, 2024, <https://dle.rae.es/presidio>.

procurador qual como protector de esclavos” [the protector of slaves] for Jose recounted the charges and what Jose admitted to doing, those crimes being (a) “el comencio carnal que tubo con ellas” [carnal acts done with the Indigenous women], (b) “el estrupo que cometio en la ultima llamada Paula” [the rape committed against la chinita, Paula], and (c) “la herida, que con una lanza le dio a un hombre llamado Prudencio el Pompeyo” [the wounds given to Purdencio el Pomeyo].⁸⁴ What is interesting about what the protector is saying here is that it seems as though the attorney is asking the court for leniency in their sentencing of Jose. He goes on to say:

[ES] Pero meditadas, y pesada con alguna retencion las circunstancias que le advierten en los mismos crimines parece que hay fundamentado para juzgar que no es tanta la malicia que encerrarnos y de consiguiente que puede tener lugar la equidad del tribunal a favor del reo, que en el propio tiempo, en que perpetuaba, y consumaba sus delitos, experimentó trabajos y penalidades personales no pequenas y que después de aprehendido fue depubrado en la prision, en que dura por el espacio de quan diez y siete meses, que van corridos hasta la fha [fecha].⁸⁵

[EN] But after careful consideration and weighing the circumstances that indicate to him in the very crimes, it seems there is grounds to judge that there is not as much malice involved and, consequently, that the equity of the court might favor the defendant, who, in the same period, was perpetuating and consummating his crimes, experienced considerable personal suffering and penalties, and who, after being apprehended, was further disciplined in prison, where he has been held for a period of about seventeen months, which have elapsed up to the present date.

So, as we can see, Jose’s lawyer makes the argument that Jose encountered his own “personal suffering and penalties” inside and outside of prison. He even

⁸⁴ Archivo General de la Nación, 988–9.

⁸⁵ Archivo General de la Nación, 988–9.

stated that “there was not much malice involved.” This is obviously an argument made on a legal basis with the attorney seemingly doing all that he can to get try and lessen the charges against his client. Even more, the protector gave his arguments with the *sietes partidas* in mind. The *siete partidas* are seven statutes first arranged during the rule of Alfonso X of Castile in the thirteenth century. They were later used as the backbone of the legislative body in Spain and its colonies.

In his closing statement, the protector makes the argument that the crimes Jose is accused of committing against the Indigenous women does not actually meet the standard described in the law. Further, the protector goes on to say that Prudencio, the man Jose hit over the head and healed, recovered perfectly from his injury and was possibly going after Jose because Prudencio himself was on trial for homicide. Burdened by the weight of his crimes, Prudencio likely provoked Jose. As it relates to Paula, the protector of the slaves mentioned that she was actually not “immature” on the contrary she was *viripotente*, which according to multiple dictionaries essentially means being sexually mature, or a woman who is of an age that is capable of getting married.^{86 87}

⁸⁶ Wiktionary, *the Free Dictionary*, “Viripotent,” accessed August 20, 2023, <https://en.wiktionary.org/w/index.php?title=viripotent&oldid=75715648>.

⁸⁷ *Diccionario de Autoridades (1726–1739)*, “Viripotente,” Tomo VI (1739), <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html>.

This is a moment in the trial where Jose and his actions are presented in another light. It could be argued that the protector there to defend him used the fact that the witnesses were Indigenous to lay claim to Jose's own innocence. This is done by disparaging the women and equating them with something other than woman as defined by the third partida. What is more, he used that same law to argue that the alleged act against Paula was actually not in defiance of the law, because Paula was of an age where she could be married. Even Jose's attorneys are neglecting the age of Paula in service to judging if she was actually "pure" or "virgin" enough for the crimes to stick. In my view, the argument against Prudencio seems like the stronger of the three considering that people who were accused of committing a crime could not accuse someone else of committing a crime until they themselves proved that they did not commit the crime they were accused of.⁸⁸

It takes a few one hundred and something pages; however, this moment in the trial presents another image of Jose, recontextualizing his alleged crimes in the framework of the siete partidas. In this framing, Jose seems less like a man hellbent on causing chaos and more like someone who potentially lost his faculties and was taken advantage of by a community of people not necessarily protected by the law. This is a moment where the mobilities of both black and Indigenous people being

⁸⁸ Samuel Parsons Scott and Robert I. Burns, S.J., *Las Siete Partidas*, Vol. 5: *Underworlds: The Dead, the Criminal, and the Marginalized* (Partidas VI and VII), (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=3441860>.

intimately connected is reaffirmed implicitly by the protector of slaves as he makes sure to remind the court that the people bringing charges against Jose were Indigenous. This potentially lends itself well to Jose's case, as the protector even asked for a lesser charge. The document reads:

[ES] Por todo lo qual pareciendo, como parece excesia la pena de cien azotes que acaso sera imposible sufra el esclavo, por deberse repustar mas estenado con la vida calamitosa, que paró en las montañas, y con la que lleva em tan dilatada prision, pide y ruega a V.A. el protector que reformando la sentencia consubrada, se digue minonarle la pena, computandole en parte de ella esa langa prision, que se fue, y de mas trabajos, que se han enunciado.⁸⁹

[EN] For all of which, it seems that the penalty of one hundred lashes is excessive, and that it would perhaps be impossible for the slave to suffer, since he must be more severely punished by the calamitous life he endured in the mountains and by the one he has been in such a long prison, he asks and begs Your Highness the protector to reform the sentence enacted and to deign to reduce his sentence, including in part of it the long prison he served and the other hardships that have been mentioned.

Here, the protector hammers on the idea that even with one hundred lashes, it would be hard for Jose, an enslaved person, to suffer because of the “calamitous” life he lived in the mountains and because of the long prison sentence that he had already endured. Ultimately, the protector's pleas fell on deaf ears as Jose was sentenced to eight years in a presidio. It becomes difficult to understand what Jose was eventually charged with as the contours of the case proved to be messy. This was, in part, influenced by the identities of all of the people involved—Jose and the Indigenous people who provided testimony. This is where our super-steamer

⁸⁹ Archivo General de la Nación, 988–9.

counter-narrative driven travel becomes imperative as we can imagine a world where Jose and his Indigenous counterparts coexist as opposed to one being chased by the other.

A Counter-Narrative that Intimately Ties Black and Indigenous People Together

Indigenous and black people did not really have the framework for kinmaking during this moment because of how each group was presented to the other. Not only that, their mobilities were intimately connected—and arguably still are—as each had roles defined for them via Spanish control. That is to say, in the colonial period, Indigenous people were positioned as “noble savages” and loyal to the Spanish crown. This is evidenced by the positions created by the Spanish and implemented in their colonies. In Colombia and the Choco, more specifically, we can see how each group understood the other. Sharp underscores some of these dynamics of the Choco with Indigenous and black populations in his text, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier: The Colombian Choco, 1680-1810*.⁹⁰

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the trial against Jose took place in Novita. Novita is described as sitting at the heart of the San Juan mining district. At one point, Novita also served as a warehouse for items carried up the river. This location was notable for its proximity to the Cauca Valley, creating a

⁹⁰ William Frederick Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier: The Colombian Choco, 1680–1810* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 15.

natural stopping point for products and travelers moving in and out of the Choco.⁹¹ Novita was also the capital of Choco at the time and was held in high regard for its ideal location for trade and transportation. Novita's closeness to the San Juan River connects it to Noanama as well, the village where Jose was accused of committing some crimes and where he was also finally arrested. This attention to the location of Novita is important for understanding the case because it provides a visual of how Jose may have arrived in Noanama to begin with. The trial happening in Novita also highlights the judicial processes of the area at the time, as the case brought against Jose by Indigenous people was tried by Spanish officials.

The proximity of Novita to the San Juan River made it a prime location for travelers and goods passing through. In the province of Novita, there were six *corregimientos* that acted as commercial and political headquarters for enslaved people, Indigenous people, and miners. Corregimientos were districts composed of Indigenous people and governed by corregidores or crown officials. As Sharp describes in his text, "the Indians residing within these areas had their own chiefs [*caciques*], governors, and mayors [*alcaldes*] but were primarily responsible to and under the control of the corregidor."⁹² The six *corregimientos* were Tado, Noanama,

⁹¹ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 15.

⁹² Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 16–17.

Los Brazos, Las Juntas, Sipi, and Baudo.⁹³ Before the use of enslaved labor, the Spanish forced Indigenous groups to work the mines. The prohibition of mine work done by Indigenous people in the area due to things such as high death rates and conflicting ideas about the treatment of “the Indian” led to the Spanish forcing them into corregimientos. In the corregimientos, Indigenous people had to pay tributes, grow food such as corn and platanos for the slave gangs, construct canoes and houses, and even act as the primary mode of transportation in the area.⁹⁴ According to Sharp, Noanama was one of the largest corregimientos in Choco. He also sheds light on the social composition of these towns as he notes that many were married, and there was an almost equal ratio of males to females.⁹⁵

Although witness testimonies of Jose suggest he did and admitted to some heinous crimes, this becomes troubling as we consider the contours of Noanama, the Choco, and Spanish colonies more broadly. The relationship between Indigenous groups and people of African descent was mediated by a racial hierarchy with religious overtures. That is to say, although Indigenous groups were transitioning out of enslavement and into “religiously purified” Spanish subjects, people of African descent were navigating new terrain as free and enslaved among the trees, rivers,

⁹³ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 17.

⁹⁴ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 20.

⁹⁵ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 21.

and mines of the Choco. As such, encounters between Indigenous people and black people were almost inevitable as black people made up a third of the population of the Choco at the time. Sharp writes that by the end of the eighteenth century, black people had replaced Indigenous groups as the largest segment of the population, by 1782 representing almost two-thirds of the population.⁹⁶ Sharp's analysis also suggests that very few black people lived in the "predominantly Indian towns Noanama, Las Juntas, or Baudo in the province of Novita . . . the Spaniards attempted to keep blacks and Indians separated, and—except during the early years of the conquest in the Choco—there is no indication that blacks or Indians respected each other or had many interrelationships."⁹⁷

Here, Sharp provides some historical context to the social composition of some of the Indigenous towns in Choco. It also provides a glimpse into how, perhaps, via the influence of the Spanish, black and Indigenous people in the area did not interact. It also could be attributed to the Indigenous peoples' new-found status as subjects to the Spanish crown that needed to undergo religious purification. The other side of this is, although Sharp states there is "no indication that blacks or Indians respected each other or had many interrelationships," I wonder how much of this can be known by the historical record. Still, Sharp's point

⁹⁶ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 23.

⁹⁷ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 23.

rings true, especially with the present case in mind involving Jose. Even while supposedly having no respect for each other, the crimes Jose was accused of highlight that the groups knew of each other in very intimate ways. So much so, as shown by the testimony of Melchor, Funes y Garcia, and Captain Don Domingo Fegayza, people from varying places banded together to make sure Jose was imprisoned for his alleged crimes.

As we can see from the previous sections, many of these officials were present, some even offering testimony to their own personal encounters with Jose. If we think about the trial, the social composition described by Sharp reaffirms some of the testimonies given by the witnesses. That is to say, it is clear that the Indigenous people had preconceived notions about black people during this time. This is evident in the very first page of the testimony. To begin the trial, the corregidor, Juan de Funes y Garcia, sets the stage by recounting an instance told to him by some of the men under his command. These men mentioned a natural fear that Indigenous people had that Jose took advantage of. Not only this, the fear is presented as being so great that their only goal was to stop him from harming and causing fear to others. This moment of Funes y Garcia describing the fear of Indigenous people is starkly presented alongside an image of Jose as elusive (because he was a runaway) and frightening, so frightening that the Indigenous “warriors” under Funes y Garcia’s command necessitated more help for the capture and imprisonment of Jose.

Ironically enough, the retelling of this first instance offers us a glimpse into the intimacy of knowing. Even in asserting that they had a “natural fear” of Jose (because he was black and enslaved), the bodily response of the Indigenous people reflected a familiarity with blackness, perhaps one that left a lasting impression. Further, we see the intimacy of knowing developed between the two as the Indigenous people start to literally track Jose’s movements, his mannerisms, and even his ways of speaking. In the narrative established by the case, this knowing is read as in service to keeping the groups distanced from each other and also to affirm black as criminal. In the counter-narrative, this knowing can instead be read as necessary for black and Indigenous people to achieve a type of freedom that is not mediated by legal and religious structures.

Renee Soulodre-La France discusses the dynamics between black and Indigenous people in her chapter “Whites and Mulattos, Our Enemies: Race Relations and Popular Political Culture in Nueva Granada” from *Beyond Black and Red: African-Native Relations in Colonial Latin America*. In the chapter, Soulodre-La France seeks to challenge traditional narratives about the relationship between black and Indigenous people by highlighting how each group embraced their agency and the fluidity of racial identities during the time to navigate the shifting terrains of their relationships. In particular, she shows how the Spanish used a rigid racial caste system to categorize people based on the purity of their blood. This system saw “pure” Africans and Indigenous people as at the bottom of a system that dictated

their sociopolitical status and their economic opportunities and legibility under the law. To subvert this position in society, Indigenous and black people formed interracial alliances to challenge colonial authorities. Although these alliances were not without their tensions, it does emphasize how each group navigated complex dynamics in service to surviving in the colonial blueprints of Nueva Granada.

I highlight the work of Souldre-La France alongside Sharp because both scholars' explorations offer context to the counter-narrative I seek to create. The moment from the trial mentioned above offers space for this counter-narrative to come about to reconsider how Jose is presented in relation to his Indigenous neighbors. In his own testimony, as I discussed earlier in the chapter, Jose lands in Noanama after running away from a mine in Timbiqui a year prior. According to him, he ran away because he was fearful of punishment after a load of corn sank in the sea while he was laboring. It is not much of a stretch to assume that, as Jose was moving around the Choco more generally, he, too, was experiencing a sense of fear. However, this sense of how Jose was potentially feeling is not of much importance to the strangers who already understood his presence as dangerous. And, if not dangerous, some seem to express confusion as the presence of a black person in the area was associated with slavery, and more specifically, chain gangs.⁹⁸ So, you have an enslaved man who ran away for fear of being punished, essentially running

⁹⁸ Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, 23.

toward committing crimes. This in and of itself presents Jose, again, ironically as hellbent on harming people and committing crimes, even as he expressed fear of being punished for something he maybe did not try to do.

But what if we reimagined these alleged encounters of Jose with the Indigenous people of Noanama as a necessary encounter for each to form different ideas about the other, perhaps free from the confines of ideas of not only race, but also religion, an opportunity to fall into the thresholds that allows for one to intimately know the other. Here, I want to briefly introduce *Chango*, Olivella's historical mythic.⁹⁹ In *Chango*, we are reminded of the different planes that African religious traditions and Catholic or Christian religions rest on. Although Olivella's mythic is not necessarily principally concerned with intimacy or desire, its presence in this chapter is meant to illuminate how the creation of fictitious worlds allows for a deeper understanding of historical processes. As will be discussed in the third chapter, the Muntu were sent to the *Nuevo Mundo* after being banished by Chango for their betrayal.¹⁰⁰ The only way the Muntu could return to their homes in Africa was by liberating themselves from slavery and its aftermath. As a result of this, the orishas arrive in el Nuevo Mundo with the Muntu as a connection to the spiritual

⁹⁹ This text is discussed more in-depth in chapter 3.

¹⁰⁰ Chango is known as the god of lightning in Yoruba Mythology. Again, see chapter 3 for more in-depth discussion of this.

realm and physical realm.¹⁰¹ It is also important to remember that Muntu includes not only living people, but also the dead, animals, vegetables, minerals, and the force that “unites man with his past, present, and future.”¹⁰²

With this context in mind, Olivella’s novel and Chango’s all-encompassing power present an interesting avenue to consider Jose beyond the case presented against him. What if, in the spirit of fabulation, we imagined Jose as part of the Muntu, a person carrying out a mission as given to him by the Orishas, someone existing between two worlds? Although Jose’s religious affiliations are not discussed in the case, the way he is constructed lends itself to an analysis of the power of Catholicism and Christianity in defining ways of being for everyone living in the Spanish colonies. One way to work against this framework of religion is by enlisting the world created by Olivella in *Chango*, a world that sees sub-Saharan African traditions as a prevailing force of power in the lives of the people living in el Nuevo Mundo.

As such, as it relates to Jose, I propose an examination of his actions through the lens of his fate potentially being in service to “keeping the struggle for

¹⁰¹ Manuel Zapata Olivella and William Luis, *Chango, The Biggest Badass*, translated by Jonathan Tittler, 6th ed. (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), xx.

¹⁰² Olivella and Luis, *Chango*, xix.

emancipation alive.”¹⁰³ This may suggest that the alleged crimes of Jose and his trial served a larger purpose of making people familiar with the contours of the relationships between black and Indigenous people, two groups whose mobilities were intimately connected. Olivella makes this apparent in his work as he recognizes the plight and fight of Indigenous people, especially as people of African descent are introduced as a replacement labor force for them. Olivella writes:

But America, / Indian Uterus, / Virgin womb raped sever times by the Wolf, / Fertilized by the Muntu / With their blood, / Sweat, / And cries,” / Chango revealed to me, / “Will give birth to a child, / A black son, / White son, / Indian son, / Part Earth, / Part tree, / Part log, / Part fire, / By himself / Redeemed.”¹⁰⁴

From this stanza in Olivella’s poem “Ngafua, Dreaming, Overhears Chango’s Curse” we can very clearly see how interconnected he sees the struggles of African and Indigenous people. He offers a metaphor of America’s uterus being “Indian,” a uterus that was raped several times over by the White Wolf (i.e., white colonizers). This metaphor is taken a step further with the arrival of African captives (the Muntu) being signified as fertilizing the Indian uterus. This is powerful as Olivella is also able to craft a powerfully layered image that acknowledges the forced removal and displacement of African captives by white colonizers into Indigenous lands. This

¹⁰³ This fate was given to Benkos Biojo by an Orisha Orunla. Biojo was a prevailing force in the establishment of San Basilio de Palenque, first free black town in the Americas.

¹⁰⁴ Manuel Zapata Olivella and William Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, translated by Jonathan Tittler, 6th ed., (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010).

forced removal and forced displacement of both African captives and Indigenous people led to the birth of the “black son,” “white son,” and “Indian son”—all of them made up of part tree, part earth, part log, part fire. I find these lines interesting because he has not yet pointed to the mixing of these different races, although he arguably combines African and Indigenous cosmologies by identifying these sons as made up of different parts of the Earth. He continues:

“Eia, son of the Muntu! / Freedom, / Freedom / Is your fate. / You will cut the fists, / The tongue, / The arms of the master who denies you. / Mighty / Lion’s paw, / Broad elephant’s leg, / You will free your son’s Indian mother, / The grandmother raped by the master, / Scorned by night, / Enchained by day / In the rut / Of the kitchen.”

“The black Indian zambo, / The mulatto, / Nurtured with your blood, / You will free from prisons, / From dungeons / And from oppressive castes. / With no boundaries in your blood, / Seed of new humankind, / Avenger of your parents, / Avenger of your children, / Freedom is your fate!”¹⁰⁵

In these following stanzas, we are brought back to some of the preoccupations in Soulodre-La France’s text as Olivella imagines the Muntu rising alongside the Indigenous people to rebel for their freedom. We can see a bit of the mixing of people starting to come through as he points to the Muntu freeing their “son’s Indian mother.” Again, Olivella is highlighting Indigenous people as birth givers to a land that eventually became known as the New World. He even highlights the sexual violence faced by Indigenous women by the White Wolf in consecrating their pillaging of this new “found” land. The last stanza highlights how the

¹⁰⁵ Olivella and Luis, *Changó*, 22–23.

intermixing of African and Indigenous blood will lead to both of their freedoms from prisons, dungeons, and oppressive castes. He sees no boundaries in their blood, and this empowers them as the new seed of humankind, leading in their mission to avenge their families and achieve freedom.

I find this sentiment as expressed by Olivella as beautiful and powerfully written. It emphasizes the stakes of crafting a world that allows us to see black and Indigenous struggles as intimately intertwined as opposed to working in opposition to each other. Ultimately, Chango's curse of the Muntu and their banishment to Nuevo Mundo highlights the inner workings of the spiritual realm but also the different ways people were responsible for upholding colonial customs and laws. That is to say, similar to what I have shown thus far, Indigenous people were exploited in similar ways to people of African descent, despite the positions of "authority" granted to them by Spanish officials, in which case, the Muntu's mission of liberating themselves from slavery and its aftermath would include dealing with the displacement and exploitation of Amerindians as well, thereby linking their pathways to freedom as intimately connected.

In the world in which Jose's trial takes place, this goal of the Muntu becomes particularly difficult as the structure of colonial society positions people of African descent and Indigenous people as in opposition to each other, with competing desires that can truly only be mediated by royal officials and courts. This is why the world created by Olivella is especially potent here. As opposed to the prevailing

narrative of Jose being unable to exist with his Indigenous neighbors and more concerned with advancing his own personal desires, in this counter-narrative I suggest that their desires coalesce. In seeing their desires and struggles intertwined in this way, the means or rather the necessity for achieving intimacy is heightened. As I will discuss more in chapter 3, this intimacy is not just a physical closeness but also an intimacy of knowing grounded in vulnerability and the ability to understand the personal and communal struggles of the other. Although the archival traces of Jose's life start and end with the criminal case record, let us imagine our super-steamer as keeping the specter of his existence alive in service to reaffirming different versions of freedom not only for him and black [enslaved] people, but also for their Indigenous counterparts.

Even more, what I want to emphasize with this chapter is that meaning is not constructed in a vacuum—that the construction of ideas and images of black and Indigenous people served a larger purpose of reaffirming the hegemonic project of the colonial overlord Spain. Not only that, but these ideas of [enslaved] black people also limited the access they had to ideas of intimacy and freedom. This chapter and dissertation are not necessarily concerned with freedom, but, as we can see in this case, the meanings of freedom are also implicit in how Jose was seen and subsequently charged. Olivella's *Muntu* and *Nuevo Mundo* offer a challenge to these notions. They provide a space for souls like Jose's to recontextualize the misfortunes of their own lives and the ones they potentially brought to others. It is a reminder

that so long as there is a ruling elite, the mobilities of marginalized people will remain intertwined, and their ways of relating to each other modeled by hegemony.

Most importantly, this chapter has shown that words such as seduction vary in meaning based on circumstances. In fact, the case of Jose reaffirmed that intimacy and desire are not always consensual in how they are sought out—that seduction is not always a wanted advancement and potentially a manipulative tactic used to fulfill desire, and this can read as dangerous. Herein lies a path for reconsidering the contours of Jose’s case as critical fabulation creates avenues for different interpretations of historical happenings, criminal proceedings included.

Chapter 2: *Sodomia as Criminal*, the Case Against

Pedro Andres and Antonio Joseph

Going through phones, sharing and tracking locations for no good reason, filming strangers in public, even screenshotting innocent dating profiles and posting them on a public platform is all self-surveillance and normalizing it is normalizing a deeper surveillance state. @OgLakyn, 1/25/2025 on X (formerly known as Twitter)¹⁰⁶

Although the case that animates the forthcoming pages is from the 1600s, I started with this epigraph because it captures the essence of what I hope to get across in this chapter. The Spanish Inquisition fostered a similar environment during its longtime rule by making sure royal subjects, enslaved people, and any other living beings self-policed themselves in service to an orderly society. Although there were no phones, laptops, dating profiles, or social media before the 1990s, the places governed by the Spanish Crown ensured that people were surveilled, and, even more they encouraged people to tell on themselves and their neighbors when people acted in ways that went against the established normative order. As I discussed briefly in the previous chapter, for the Spanish Crown and its colonies, this order had its foundation in notions of honor and morality. These notions of honor

¹⁰⁶ A note on epigraph: I include the tweet as a way to ground the chapter because, without straying from the goals of my dissertation, I am also implicitly pointing to how modern notions and understandings of surveillance are connected to a longer colonial project. Its use here is not to amplify or condone the other tweets of the user I quoted. I only seek to speak to the contents of the specific one mentioned here.

and morality incited people to not only report on alleged crimes, but to also lie about them when swayed under the pressure of torture and death.

The following case differs from the one brought against Jose Eusebio, as this case is from the Spanish Inquisition, the highest court from the late 15th-century to the mid 19th-century. Known for its confluence of religion and law, the *Santo Officio* was ruthless in its punishment and vindictive in its pursuit of criminalizing anyone seen as unholy. Before we take our super-steamer to the Mallorca shores, I want to first close the loop on the epigraph with a book published in London in 1683 by James Salgado.¹⁰⁷ Salgado was a former priest who converted to Christianity. The title reads “From the Slaughter-house, Or a Brief Description of the Spanish Inquisition, In a Method Never before Used: with Figures Ingraved in Copper. Which is laid open.”¹⁰⁸ The description continues:

The Tyranny, Infolence, Perfidiousness, and barbarous cruelty of that tribunal; Defected by Several examples and Observations. Dedicated to the King. Gathered together by the Pains and Study of James Salgado a converted Spanish Priest; who beareth in his Body the Prints of their Inhuman rigors, whereto is added to this Impression the true Church of Christ, in opposition to these Cruelties.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ James Salgado, *The Slaughter-House, or, A Brief Description of the Spanish Inquisition in a Method Never Before Used, With Figures Ingraved in Copper in Which Is Laid upon the Tyranny, Insolence, Persidiousness, and Barbarous Cruelty of That Tribunal: Detected by Several Examples and Observations Dedicated to the King / Gathered Together by the Pains and Study of James Salgado* (London: Printed for William Marshall, 1683), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2240990539/citation/960B37A9884548B7PQ/1>.

¹⁰⁸ Salgado, *The Slaughter-House*.

¹⁰⁹ Salgado, *The Slaughter-House*.

This book is interesting to me for many reasons, the main one being that it offers an example of the results of the “Tyranny, Infolence, Perfidiousness, and barbarous cruelty” that led people to self-police themselves and their neighbors. It includes images that describe the meetings of the inquisitors and the torture they brought to others, as seen by Salgado. He wrote about bearing the scars of the Inquisition on his body, which makes sense then that he published this book in London seemingly with the support of leaders in Great Britain, France, and Ireland.¹¹⁰ Salgado’s metaphor of the Inquisition as a slaughter house rings true when you consider the long process of the trials and the moments that lead to sometimes coerced confessions and witness testimonies. The Inquisition as a slaughter house and self-surveillance go hand-in-hand as the slaughter house was able to maintain itself because Inquisitors could rely on not only their own violent methods but also the fear of people wrapped up in the processes.

This harkens back to the epigraph in that Salgado bore the scars of these processes. When we think of why people take videos and pictures of everyday interactions, it usually stems from a place of needing to capture “proof” of the incident. Many times, taking footage has saved the lives of people, especially the lives of black and brown people. Other times, captured footage reveals the true intentions of a person that differs from their initial plea. They frame the narrative

¹¹⁰ Salgado, *The Slaughter-House*, 2.

one way and then upon review by the general public and perhaps the police, we get a more accurate picture of what actually happened. When I mention the police here, I am thinking about the moments when the police have been called on black and brown people for alleged crimes. This, along with a push for more accountability for police violence against civilians, led to officers adopting body cameras in the United States. Thus, the uptick in recording everyday encounters, nefarious or not, is grounded in a larger system of surveillance. Although oftentimes it is done in service to protecting someone, they also become ways to understand the true intentions behind a situation.

Understanding these things leads to the construction of a narrative. The contours of the narrative are shaped by whoever has been called to witness its unfolding. This brings us back to the power sustained by systems such as the Inquisition in that it set the standard for how life should be lived in the Spanish Kingdom. This power was sustained not only through coercion and consent but also by normalizing the surveillance of self and neighbors. We will see this in the coming pages as we dive deeper into the case that was brought against Pedro Andres and Antonio Joseph.

The larger narrative established via this case is one that we have seen across the dissertation so far, that being that black enslaved people were seen as sexually deviant, more than likely violent, and capable of causing chaos in their quotidian lives and at the systemic level. Another narrative we see established is that sodomy

was a sin punishable by imprisonment or death. If one was accused of such an act, they were forced to repent and be held accountable for their immorality. I argue that, for this standard to be maintained in society, the Inquisition relied on witness testimonies and their view of each other's character. This self-policing inevitably led to the unfolding of queer intimacies and the intimacy of knowing as we see a confusing, yet sadly compelling, story come together about Antonio and Pedro Andres, mediated by what others thought they knew about themselves and their neighbors. With this in mind, some of the central questions this chapter seeks to answer are these: (a) in what ways did the Spanish Inquisition reaffirm its own authority by encouraging people to self-surveil? (b) How does this surveillance become an avenue for reaffirming ideas about race, gender, and sexuality? (c) What does *que(e)rying* this Inquisition reveal about the *queer intimacies* and *intimacy of knowing* fomented by way of self-surveillance and neighborhood gossip? And by extension, (d) how do these ideas aid in the criminalization of a potential *innocent* act between two people that may have not known each other?

The chapter will go as follows—an introduction to Pedro Andres Coll and Antonio Joseph is followed by analysis of their alleged crime, the trial, and the narrative established by each. After this, our super-steamer powers on in creating a counter-narrative that holds intimacy close. For now, those aboard our super-steamer get to meet those at the center of the case, Pedro and Antonio, two people

in need of some personal understanding—the kind where someone can truly put themselves in the other’s shoes, simply because they once wore a similar pair.

Who Was Pedro Andres Coll and Antonio Joseph?

Alas, the year is 1633 and we have just arrived in the municipality of Sant Joan in Mallorca, Spain, where Pedro Andres Coll and Antonio Joseph await sentencing for the crime of *pecado nefando*.¹¹¹ Ironically enough, the two seem to be engulfed in a contentious situation, one of he-said-they-said, a battle that they were not meant to win. Before getting into the details of their alleged interaction, let us first establish who these new people are who will be joining us on our super-steamer of counter-narrative driven ocean travel.

Pedro Andres Coll, affectionately known as the “drunken bastard child” of a local notary, was a 16-year-old allegedly caught underneath Antonio Joseph. Now, Antonio was a 30-year-old enslaved black man, whose owner was an Alguacil, or officer of the Holy Inquisition in Mallorca. Both Pedro and Antonio were said to have been involved in an amorous affair, one that saw the two allegedly desecrating the honor that intimate relationships were meant to foment. Juan Foyos, the principal witness against the two, made sure to let everyone in a comfortable distance know what he had seen. Because to him, if he did not, he would be punished along with Pedro and Antonio. It is this type of attitude that the Inquisition fostered among

¹¹¹ Written as Saint Juan in the document.

royal subjects in maintaining a societal order that was both heteropatriarchal and self-policing.

Important to this discussion also is the axis of race and age in construction of heteropatriarchal power. In the creation of this power also came the establishment of hegemonic order which included the regulation of race, class, sex, gender, and sexuality—hence, the establishment of not only a patriarchal society but a heterosexual one. A work relevant to this discussion is Maria Lugones' "Heterosexualism and The Colonial/Modern Gender System."

To understand the "colonial/modern gender system," it is important to first explore where Lugones derives the term from, that being Quijano's *coloniality of power*. Quijano defines the coloniality of power as the matrix of power which has outlived colonialism despite its formal ending. He argues this pervasive process established the first global world order. At the foundation of the coloniality of power is the conceptualization of race and the duality of binaries such as European/non-European and dominant/inferior. The production of these binaries provide the framework for a hegemonic social order which positions the [white] European as the forefather and all-bearer of rationality and power. As such, coloniality of power is a useful framework for understanding how race becomes constitutive of labor, sex, and its resources and vice versa. Here is where Lugones' formulation of the colonial/modern gender system becomes crucial as she takes Quijano's analysis of

race as an axis of coloniality of power to consider gender beyond Quijano's conceptualization of biological sex.

Building from these notions, Lugones defined the colonial/modern gender system as introducing gender itself as a means of organizing relations of production, property relations, cosmologies, and ways of knowing during colonialism and also modernity.¹¹² Lugones' formulation of the colonial/modern gender system offers a framework for understanding how and why the Spanish crown would rely on a system such as the Inquisition to manage relations among its subjects. Because the Inquisition muddied the waters between law and religion, it became an effective avenue for "organizing relations of production, property relations, cosmologies, and ways of knowing." These cosmologies and ways of knowing included how people understood male/female and "good sex" or "bad sex." These cosmologies and ways of knowing were in congruence with the organizing of relations of production and property as the Inquisition nurtured an environment of telling on your neighbors, your coworkers, and even your family members. Again, the boundaries between these different areas became crossed as people were made to feel like Holy officials and God were always watching. This type of watchful eye simultaneously represses avenues for intimacy, thereby opening up avenues for queer intimacies, which is

¹¹² Maria Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System," *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007), 186.

evidenced in the present case. Similar to Jose in chapter 2, Antonio and Pedro were not necessarily punished for doing the act, they were punished for the mere suspicion of it. This marks sex that is not between man and woman as “bad” and unlawful, and again we see how racial hierarchies were used to reaffirm sexual ones. Despite the Inquisition’s best efforts to punish crimes such as sodomy, they could not fully account for the emotional and erotic economies that were developed in the privacy of everyday closeness.

With this in mind, we can segue into examining some of the literature written on the Spanish Inquisition and surveillance. This notion of surveillance is integral to the case against Pedro Andres and Antonio Joseph as the witness testimonies divulged a game of telephone with Pedro and Antonio at the center of it. This was not just a case of chisme, or people being nosey, it was very much a part of living and surviving under the eye of the Holy court.¹¹³

With this in mind, we can consider John Slater’s “Containment, Surveillance and Biopower in Early Modern Spain.” In his introduction, Slater posits that, through looking at different pieces of Spanish Literature from the 16th and 17th centuries, it

¹¹³ Out of interest for myself and the use of chisme here, I looked it up in *Diccionario de Autoridades*. I think it is fun that the term can be dated back to 1729! Here is what it says: “Murmuración ò cuento, con que [ii.325] algúno intenta descomponer una persóna con otra, metiendo zizaña, y refiriendo lo que no tiene necesidad de que se sepa. Viene del Griego Schisma, por ser este el efecto del chisme, que siempre causa discordias y malas avenencias.” [“Gossip or tale, with which [ii.325] someone tries to discord one person with another, sowing discord, and relating what there is no need for anyone to know. It comes from the Greek Schisma, because this is the effect of gossip, which always causes discord and bad agreements.”]

becomes apparent how “power over enemies and power over women rely on cognate systems for the management of continence and incontinence via surveillance and domination.”¹¹⁴ In other words, in the different texts, power was sustained through knowledge of the other, with that knowledge serving as a means to surveil and dominate the other. The main prongs of this surveillance and domination is containment and silence.

Although my preoccupations in this chapter do not concern women and their associated continences (e.g., menstrual cycles and birth-giving abilities), I find the framework that Slater presents to be useful for understanding how surveillance being normalized allows for the continued control over people's sexual and reproductive lives that goes beyond women. We can see this in the case at hand, again, through non-hetero sex being deemed criminal and immoral. These views of sex are constructed and sustained through heteropatriarchy—a system that heralds the man as dominant and capable of conquering, while women and children are submissive, docile, and open to being “led” by men. This view of families and relationships does not leave space for the moments of intimacy that prove these systems to be faulty. We can see this in the examples presented by Carolina Giraldo Botero.

¹¹⁴ John Slater, “Containment, Surveillance and Biopower in Early Modern Spain,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 139–148, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14636204.2020.1760417>.

In her article, “Esclavos sodomitas en cartagena colonial. Hablando del pecado nefando,” Giraldo Botero provides a foundation to begin understanding “nefarious sin” through different instances of pleasure and spirituality, or *brujeria* and *sodomia*, among enslaved black people in colonial Cartagena.¹¹⁵ Through these terms, she makes clear the many ways the sexuality of enslaved black people was constructed to control their reproduction and social relations. In the spaces between *pecado nefando*, *sodomia*, and even *brujeria*, captives embraced moments of pleasure and enjoyment. Although the act may not always be sexual in nature, the bond or relationship itself is very much concerned with fulfilling the needs, wants, and desires of the other. Giraldo Botero describes these relationships as resistance to what the Inquisition and its courts called sinful. In fact, oftentimes the enslaved reimagined their relationship to their sexuality and spirituality through these encounters that the Spanish saw as “demonic.” Giraldo Botero affirms that while sodomy was illegal and slave sexuality was heavily regulated, enslaved people continued to cultivate their own provocative moments.

Giraldo Botero’s reading will become more relevant in the counter-narrative section; however, I mention it here, again, to give an idea of how scholars have written about this time period and the specific topics of sexuality and enslaved black

¹¹⁵ Botero, “Esclavos sodomitas,” 2.

people. With these articles in mind, our super steamer can press on in our journey to figuring out why Pedro and Antonio suffered the fates that they did.

With this information in mind, we get a better idea of the contours of the case against Pedro and Antonio. There is not much separation between the church and the law at this time, and this relationship between the two form the basis of the narratives produced via the case. As I stated before, part of the narrative the case established was that Pedro and Antonio were found doing the most nefarious sin of sodomy, or *pecado nefando*, when witnesses alleged that Pedro and Antonio were found with their pants pulled down and one on top of the other. Counteracting this narrative is another one, and that is Pedro and Antonio themselves pleading with the prosecutor that the witnesses were lying and what they actually saw was the two of them engaged in a quarrel. The witnesses pushed back against this by insisting a fight was not possible if both of them left their weapons outside of the *garita*. As such, the narratives produced via the cases reveal how hard it is to prove what is or is not true. Ultimately though, that is not the concern of the Inquisition. Their main concern was to punish not only particular acts but also even the idea of the act, meaning it did not matter whether or not Pedro and Antonio actually had sex. All that mattered was that witnesses allegedly saw them do it and, because of that, it must be laid to rest immediately.

Although Pedro and Antonio were determined to deny ties to one another, the counter-narrative I see produced via this case is two loved ones potentially

trying to protect one another—and, if not that, two lost, maybe even confused souls, meeting in what was probably the most private quarters they could find, to act out their most intimate desires together. What is ironic and even slightly funny about their story being that they were fighting is that there is something homoerotic about that, too. So, perhaps the nefarious sin was not the act of the sex but the act of two men being found close to one another—almost skin to skin—in combat or in sex. This is wrong because the tools necessary for each were not used properly (i.e., the swords allegedly being outside and their penises being used on each other as opposed to a woman who is lying down on her back).

This narrative, although provocative, illuminates the fears of the hegemonic structure of the time—that people would not fear them or God enough and choose to do what their heart desired. As is seen throughout the case with comments made by the prosecutor and the witnesses, acting out this type of desire should be punished and asked for forgiveness, not only from God, but the kingdom and its constituents, too. Constructing this counter-narrative via details given in the case, I suggest perhaps it is a messy love story—two people, who potentially continued to seek each other out for "actos carnales" while they were drunk or lonely. The point of relaying this is to highlight the quotidian lives of the enslaved and the people they encountered. Although life was daunting and ruthless, there were pockets of time when intimacy was used as a means to flee reality. Why else would two people from disparate spaces find each other in that same garita?

Although I do not seek to romanticize the details of their lives, I would be remiss if I did not wallow in the potential sadness and disconnectedness Pedro and Antonio felt. And again, what if they were not sad or lonely and simply wanted to rebel against a system that marked them both as unworthy in many ways? This is not to say that being “fatherless” is comparable to being enslaved; it is just to say that sometimes people find each other for varying reasons, and perhaps Antonio and Pedro needed or wanted each other for those reasons. Again, this counter-narrative is in service to reimagining these moments of intimacy as just that as opposed to criminal acts. This pivot in story-telling allows us to fully understand how our current ways of relating to each other are grounded in a history of coercion and control—a steady playbook by hegemonic forces to maintain power over the people.

The Crimes, the Trial, and the Subsequent Narrative Produced

The clock on our superpowered time traveling steamer reads *20 de Noviembre 1637*, destination: Mallorca, Spain. I think we have finally reached the point where we can name our vessel. As we continue to add new faces to our steamer, I can’t help but think of how close we’ve all gotten just by way of our travels through ruptures of time. *El Cercano*, or *the Close One* feels most appropriate. I imagine by the end of this trial, we will all be even closer.

The doors of *el Cercano* close behind us as we approach an arena dressed as a courtroom. In this courtroom we get our first glimpses of Pedro Andres and Antonio Joseph. Their heads hang low with sadness and perhaps defeat as they were

potentially coerced into their confessions. As I will go on to show, the details of these two people's alleged encounter took many turns stemming from the accusations of one Juan Foyos and his collaborator Juan Escandell Mellas. Further, as we move through the contours of this case, similar to chapter 1, we will see how these legal processes engage in myth-making of their own. It is an uncomfortable threshold to rest in; however, we are brought back to considering how archives produce truths of their own that are validated by the power vested to them. By que(e)rying the archive, this authority is challenged in service to considering the propensity of its subjects and purveyors to reformulate the narratives found in them. These inque(e)ries open up pathways to highlight the everyday intimacies that are sometimes not seen as important to understand or know.

The story begins with Pedro Andres standing before the court with his *encurador* Juan Nadal, who was also a jailer.¹¹⁶ The prosecution first starts by asking Pedro if he know why he was imprisoned, to which he answered no. The prosecution followed up by asking him where he was the night before and who he was with. Pedro answered that he was in the bastion of St. Joan inside of “la garita grande fuerca.”¹¹⁷ Pedro said that he was inside the garita because he had just run away

¹¹⁶ Not sure of what *encurador* is meant to mean, but the closest English equivalent is probably a legal advocate who is not his lawyer.

¹¹⁷ “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll,” PARES, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://pares.mcu.es:443/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/3748025>, 9. [English translation: “big, strong, sentry box”]

from his dad and was afraid he was going to be punished further. As he was inside the garita, Pedro alleged that he saw Antonio Joseph enter the garita drunk. When he arrived, Pedro recounted telling him not to bother him or make him upset. When Antonio did not let up, Pedro picked up a stone to defend himself which led to him and Antonio wrestling. Hearing the kerfuffle, Juan Foyos went in to break up the fight by striking Antonio Joseph over the back with a sword, forcing him to leave. Shortly after, Foyos told Pedro to go to the Holy Office and confess as to avoid blame.¹¹⁸

When asked by the prosecution why he asked for forgiveness, Pedro answered that he had not sinned but wanted forgiveness for fighting Antonio. He was also asked whether or not he was found with his pants down with “the slave on top of him” and if he accepted a bribe from Antonio to give to Foyos so he would not tell the truth of the situation. Pedro stood firmly on that story being a lie and denied having given any money to Foyos. The prosecution also went to ask how long had Antonio been courting Pedro, another question that seemed to confuse Pedro and to which he answered that had never been a thing. When it came time for Antonio to appear, he was asked similar questions by the prosecution.

Officially, Pedro Andres and Antonio Joseph were charged with crimes of *pecado nefando de sodomia*. In the eyes of the court, they had acted on one of the

¹¹⁸ PARES, “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll,” Images 9–13.

most heinous of sins, and the court intended to punish them for it. There had been about 15+ witness testimonies, many given on behalf of Antonio Joseph, some being from the people who saw or heard about the alleged crimes. The case itself was drawn out over the course of 2–3 years. By the end of the trial, Antonio Joseph had died in jail while awaiting the verdict. Pedro was sadly sentenced to ten years in the galleys of the Inquisition, along with being paraded around Ibiza on a donkey with his crimes being read aloud. Along with this, he was banished for life from the island of Mallorca more generally and his home Ibiza for being found guilty of the crimes. The being paraded around on a donkey and being banished for life are clear indications of public shaming to sway others from committing the same crimes.

The outcome of this case and the trial alone also highlights that, for these Inquisition cases, most times people were assumed guilty and had to prove their innocence. This is obviously harder to do, especially if you are seen as a scoundrel in local communities and do not have many people to come to your defense. This was the case of Pedro Andres, as even though he filed an appeal to the original verdict, the appeals process ultimately fell through, as, in Pedro's own words, he was poor, far away from home, and had no one to advocate on his behalf.¹¹⁹ For Antonio, his death is treated merely as a formality in the case, as there did not seem to be much time dedicated to trying to figure out what happened to him. The treatment of

¹¹⁹ PARES, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," Images 2-4.

Pedro and Antonio throughout the trial on the surface follows the typical procession of these types of cases. At a deeper level though, we see how these trials were used to reaffirm certain stereotypes about the people involved and also the Inquisition's power to define social relations and social categories.

In Defense of Antonio Joseph's Life, Before his Life was Gone

As mentioned in the previous section, the death of Antonio Joseph is treated almost like a footnote in the grand scheme of the case. This is almost spot on with the rest of the trial as the historical record itself does not even name Antonio Joseph as part of the case. In fact, when you search this document on the PARES website, the title appears as "Proceso de fe de Pedro Andres Coll." As one could imagine, it caught me a bit by surprise to get into the specifics of the document and read about the large part Antonio seemed to play not only in the alleged crimes but more generally in the life of Pedro Andres himself.

Antonio Joseph, a 30-year-old enslaved black man, belonged to the family of Pedro Suner. There are not many details given about Antonio's life outside of knowing who his owner was. There is no indication who his parents were, if he was single or married, or if he had kids or siblings. We do not even learn how he became enslaved by Suner. What we do learn about Antonio is that he seemed to be an active member of his community. Suner mentioned that Antonio prayed, told the truth when called, and enjoyed having a drink with their neighbors. Although these details do not tell us the full story of Antonio's network, it does show that he was

potentially single with no family. There is also not much secondary information available about Suner even though he was an officer of the Inquisition. This differs from the information available about the previous case and could be for many reasons, mainly this case occurred in the 1630s while the other in the early 1800s, meaning the record keeping could have differed across time.

Unlike the case against Jose Eusebio in Colombia, Antonio's owner showed up to court ready to defend the "honor" of his enslaved person. This seems especially relevant given that Suner was also a holy officer of the court. So, perhaps not only was he defending the honor of Antonio, but he was also defending the honor of himself and his family. Again, on the surface, Suner producing witnesses in defense of Antonio Joseph was not out of the ordinary. On a deeper level, I am more interested in what Suner's defense reaffirmed about Antonio even in trying to defend him against allegations of him being wicked.

We can first start with how Suner recounts the events that led up to the allegations being made against Antonio, and subsequently Pedro Andres. In many parts of his testimony he remarked that Juan Foyos and Juan Escandell Mellas could not be fully trusted because they were associated with the likes of Antonio and Pedro Andres (i.e., Antonio being enslaved and Pedro being a wayward child). In his initial testimony, he made the claims that Foyos and Mellas were men of low and vile character. He even brought up his own allegations of Foyos putting his hands on his mother and Mellas marrying a former prostitute. To Suner, those "lifestyles"

made Foyos and Mellas unreliable witnesses. To make matters worse, Suner also stated firmly that Foyos was the mortal enemy of Antonio.

Recounting the events himself, Suner stated,

[ES] O, muriado el huego que otros jugavan en el bestion de las monjas, y ninguno de todos los que estavan en su compania havisto que el dicho esclavo haya hecho tal senal a dicho pedro andres coll, y es querer confirmar y adevirse a la voluntad del dicho foyos, porque dice el refran, si mi les gaudet simili, ademas que el dicho Mellas es moco de poca experiencia y de poca bondad que si fuera verdad, lo que el ha testificado huviera dicho y denunciado que los que estavan en su compania havian visto como el dicho negro havria hecho la dicha senal con la lengua a dicho Pedro Andres lo que cessa ser ansi, y es contra toda verdad y consta de lo contrario en las testificaciones de los suso dicho delinquentes para que sequexen de la maldad y traicion que es estada ynnentada por los suso dichos contra de los dichos Pedro Andres y Antonio negro y por ser hombres de mala nimo y tener los mala voluntad han procurado todo lo suso dicho con alguna conformidad entre ellos y para que conste de los malos tratos de los sus dichos y de como son hombres viles y des hechados y de ninguna honrra ni virtud por tanto hace y pone los capitulos siguientes los quales.¹²⁰

[EN] Oh, the game that others played in the [in the beast of the nuns?], and none of those who were with him have seen that the said slave made such a sign to said Pedro Andres Coll, and it is an attempt to confirm and adhere to the will of the said Foyos because, as the saying goes, if it pleases them similarly. Moreover, the said Mellas is a person of little experience and of little virtue, for if what he has testified were true, he would have said and reported that those who were with him had seen how the said black man made the said sign with his tongue to said Pedro Andres, which is not true, and it is against all truth and is contradicted by the testimonies of the aforementioned wrongdoers, so that they may be freed from the evil and treachery that has been falsely invented by the aforementioned against the said Pedro Andres and Antonio negro. And because they are men of bad character and ill will, they have conspired in all of the above, with some agreement between them, and to show the bad treatment of the aforementioned and how they are vile men, without honor or virtue. Therefore, the following chapters are presented.

¹²⁰ PARES, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," Images 38–39 in document.

Here, Pedro Suner is making the argument that Mellas and Foyos are both men of bad character who have it out for Pedro and Antonio. It is interesting that in drawing these conclusions about the two, Suner also painted a picture of how the people involved in the case know each other outside of it. In the first few lines of the testimony above, Suner describes a game that was played in what was probably the courtyard of some nuns.¹²¹ During this time, apparently Mellas allegedly saw Antonio make a sign with his tongue toward Pedro when they were all out playing one night. Suner argued that none of the other people playing saw the same thing as Foyos and Mellas, and the allegations they presented were inventions by people of little virtue and experience.

Here, I am bringing attention to the details Suner is objecting to, the main being that if Mellas saw all of these things, why did he not denounce the people he was in the company of? This idea of denouncing also seems to point to how the line between religion and law is blurred. To Suner, Mellas had little experience and little goodness, so why should the court believe the testimony of a delinquent? However, do things being true about Mellas necessarily mean their testimonies were of no use? Of course, also, the same argument could be made about Antonio Joseph who was seen in a similar light given that he was an enslaved black man. A scoundrel, although a praying one nonetheless.

¹²¹ "El bestion de las monjas" is how it is written in the document.

This became evident when Suner presented his own witnesses to the court. In fact, he presented nineteen of them and laid out thirteen “reasons” (named *capítulos* in the document) as to why Antonio Joseph was innocent and, even more, as to why Foyos and Mellas could not be believed. Among the witnesses brought in to testify on behalf of Antonio Joseph were friends and coworkers of Pedro Suner, some other enslaved men, and even a woman who was neighbors with Juan Foyos’ mother. Before getting into more of what the social dynamics the testimonies of these people revealed, I would like to give a brief overview of the *capítulos* introduced by Suner. They were collected and written as follows on May 20, 1635¹²²:

Table 1. Pedro Suner’s Reasons Why Antonio Joseph was Innocent.

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
1 Pedro [Suner] pone que el dicho Juan Foyos de officio alparagatero es un bagamundo y de ninguna virtud, por lo que pone las manos sobre de su madre diversas veces siendo a que el la una muger pobre es verdad	Pedro [Suner] claims that the man named Juan Foyos, by profession [alparagatero], is a vagabond and of no virtue, as he repeatedly places his hands on his mother, who is a poor woman, which is true.
2 Y tem pone que el dicho Juan Foyos por ser hombres tan de hechado se casso con una muger publica Ramera como en efecto esta cassando	He also claims that Juan Foyos, being such a disgraceful man, married a public woman of ill repute, a prostitute, as he indeed married.
3 Y tem pone que el dicho Juan Foyos por el semblante es un hombre vinos, y de baramano y le han visto muchas veces borracho y en verdad	He further claims that Juan Foyos appears to be a drunken man, often seen drunk, which is true.

¹²² PARES, “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll.,” Images 39–41.

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
<p>4 Y tem pone que por ser el dicho Foyos tan [illegible] el(?) y des jectado estando haciendo guarda en el bestion dicho des.t(?) Pedro tuvo tan mal amino y atrevimiento que abrio la cassa mata de donde hurtaron y trugeron astas, por/hiora(?), balas y cuchares de las piecas de dicho bestion. Y despues vendieron las suso dichas cossas y visto que fueron descubiertos se huyeron de la presente ysla y es verdad</p>	<p>He claims that because of Juan Foyos's disgraceful behavior, while on guard at the said bastion, Pedro took such audacity and courage that he opened the treasure chest from where they stole and brought out bows, arrows, bullets, and knives from the mentioned bastion. Afterward, they sold these items and, when discovered, fled the present island, which is true.</p>
<p>5 Y tem pone que por el semblante estan en consuetud de rronar, hurto(?) en el estano passado de la barraca de Francisco Rimban unas calcas blancas de uno de los hombres que trabajavan en dicha [image 40] barraca y fue descubierto por el dicho Antonio Joseph esclavo que le acuso y por eso tiene y ha tenido y por mala voluntad al dicho Antonio Joseph y es verdad</p>	<p>He claims that, by reputation, they are accustomed to stealing, and last year, in the shed of Francisco Rimban, they stole some white pants from one of the men working there. They were caught by Antonio Joseph, the slave, who accused them. For this reason, Juan Foyos has had ill will toward Antonio Joseph, which is true.</p>
<p>6 Y tem pone que el dicho Juan Escandell Mellas es un moco yncapas tenido y reputado por un mentiroosso y que a servido por criado de algunas cassas por ser moco de poca honrra y virtud y ordinarian trabaja y come y veve con cautivos comprados y vendidos y es verdad</p>	<p>He claims that Juan Escandell Mellas is a scoundrel, known and considered a liar. He has worked as a servant in various houses because of his dishonorable and virtueless behavior. He often works, eats, and drinks with captives who have been bought and sold, which is true.</p>
<p>7 Y tem pone el dicho Mellas es ladron publico que de todo lo que puede se vale de sus manos y por tal tenido y reputado y es verdad</p>	<p>He claims that Juan Escandell Mellas is a public thief who takes advantage of anything he can with his hands, and is regarded and known as such, which is true.</p>
<p>8 Y tem pone el dicho Juan Escandell Mellas oy di nariam.te(?) come y veve(?) y esta en cassa del dicho Juan Foyos por ser grandes amigos y ansi todos han traído un acordio contra el dicho Antonio Joseph y es verdad</p>	<p>He claims that Juan Escandell Mellas regularly eats and drinks and stays at the house of Juan Foyos, as they are great friends. Together, they have brought an accusation against Antonio Joseph, which is true.</p>
<p>9 Y tem pone que por el semblante consta que estando y havientando los dichos Juan Mellas y Juan Foyos ordinariamente juntos para mas disimular dice el dicho Juan Mellas que no ssave del successo de los suso dichos sin no fue al cabo de dias estando y havitarido ordinariamente</p>	<p>He claims that, by reputation, it is known that Juan Mellas and Juan Foyos frequently stayed together, and to disguise it further, Juan Mellas says he doesn't know about the events mentioned above, except for the days they spent</p>

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
dentro la presente villa y en cassa de dicho Foyos y es verdad	together in the present town and at Foyos's house, which is true.
10 Y tem pone que el dia que dicen que el dicho Antonio Joseph cometio el dicho casso con el dicho [image 41] Pedro Andres Coll el dicho negro Antonio Joseph comio y venio en cassa declara orio(?) la veniendo todo lo que pudo de vino y despues venio toda la agua ardrerite(?) que pudo de tal manera que se fue de dicha cassa ya tocada la oracion estando del todo borracho y fue radesi y es verdad	He claims that on the day they say Antonio Joseph committed the act with Pedro Andres Coll, the black man Antonio Joseph ate and drank a lot of wine at the house, then drank as much water as he could until he became drunk. He left the house when it was already prayer time, completely drunk, and was disorderly, which is true.
11 Y tem pone que el dicho Antonio Joseph negro todos los dias de fiestas y de guardar han visto aquel yra o yrmissa(?) y confessar en la quaresma como acostumbran hacer los buenos christianos y es verdad	He claims that the black man Antonio Joseph has been seen every day during holidays and days of keeping the faith, going to mass and confessing during Lent, as good Christians are accustomed to doing, which is true.
12 Y tem possa que el dicho Antonio Joseph esclavo fue al bestion dicho de las madres monjas a media hora de sol y cessa el ser verdad lo que esta dicho por el dicho Juan Mellas en su testifiacion que el dicho Antonio Joseph apuestas del sol que dice hico cierta senal a dicho Pedro Andres Coll trayendo le la lengua, lo que no es estado visto por ninguno de los testimonios que se hallaron alli pressentes y es verdad	He claims that the slave Antonio Joseph went to the bastion of the nuns' mothers at noon, and that the truth of what was said by Juan Mellas in his testimony, that Antonio Joseph made a certain sign to Pedro Andres Coll by sticking out his tongue, has not been witnessed by any of the other testimonies present there, which is true.
13 Y tem pone que todas las dichas cosas son verdaderas	He claims that all of these things are true.

I want to draw attention to the first capítulo. Suner testified to the court that Foyos was of no virtue and also abusive toward his own mother. These allegations are troublesome and say a lot about the character of Foyos. It also offers a glimpse into how Suner's testimony contributes to the construction of the narrative via the case. This first capítulo is the weight of Suner's defense in trying to cast doubt on

Foyos and Mellas's allegations. He also, perhaps (un)intentionally reaffirmed a religious and legal tenant by highlighting how not only was Foyos allegedly being abusive but he was harming his own mother, which is "criminal" in its own right. This capítulo is also interesting in this context because it reveals how interconnected this local community was. By Suner presenting these reasons to the court, he was also confirming that he could present witnesses that could testify to knowing of the same things.

In this case, these allegations against Foyos are also minimized to local gossip, as ironically enough, the closest testimony to Foyos's mom was her neighbor, Joneta Palerma, the wife of Jayme Cardona Fustero. According to Palerma, Foyos and his mom were having an argument about some keys. Frustrated with his mom, Foyos threw the keys on the staircase of their neighbor, Bartolomé Orbay. As it relates to the allegations of him hitting her, Palerma said that she only knows about that because Foyos's mom told her about it, not because she saw it herself. In testimonies such as these, we can see how hard it was to prove something as true. The only people who could tell the truth about whether or not Foyos hurt his mom were Foyos and his mom. It is even more troubling because Foyos's mom was not there in court to speak on her own behalf. I imagine this could be for many reasons, mainly perhaps not wanting to go against her son's testimony.

This axis becomes even more interesting when we consider capítulos 8–10. Here, Suner divulges a bit more about the social dynamics of the community more

generally but also of the principal figures in the case. In capítulo 8, Suner alleged that Foyos and Mellas spent a lot of time together, eating and drinking. He even mentioned Mellas sometimes staying at Foyos's house. Because of this dynamic, Suner makes the case that Mellas was just lying on behalf of Foyos, further emphasizing why he could not be trusted. Ironically enough, in giving this testimony, in capítulo 10 Suner harkens back to the day of the alleged encounter between Pedro and Antonio. He said that on that day, Antonio Joseph got drunk at Foyos's house. In fact, he was drunk and disorderly but still made it in time for prayer. The recollection of events told in this way by Suner offers insight into how the community surveilled itself. To be clear, this surveillance also ironically reveals an intimacy of knowing as Suner spoke about the mentioned people as if he knew them well. The conviction behind him deeming Foyos a liar comes from an intimate place of knowing—Suner had seemingly known of other lies and plots of Foyos and it was his mission to make this intimate knowing clear to the court, in service of Antonio's innocence.

Going back to a point I made earlier, here is a moment of Suner affirming that although Antonio had his own issues, that did not stop him from tending to his religious responsibilities. By highlighting this in Antonio's character, Suner implicitly rejects those qualities in Foyos and Mellas especially by highlighting their drinking problems and the women that they dated or married. This takes us back to capítulos 2, 4, 5, and 6. In each of these instances, Suner either alleges that Foyos and Mellas

were drunks or that they were involved in some stealing scandals. In capítulo 5, he stated that Foyos and Mellas stole from Francisco Rimban, the owner of an enslaved man named Pedro, who was seemingly a known associate of Antonio Joseph. Foyos and Mellas allegedly took some white pants from Rimban and the person who caught them and told on them was Antonio. Suner argues that these are the reasons why Foyos came after Antonio, because he was mad that he could not blame Antonio for the crime instead.¹²³ Along with being a scoundrel, a wayfarer, and abusive, in Suner's eyes, Foyos was also vindictive, manipulative, and abusing the justice/religious system. His testimony was built on stories of his own creation, and to make matters worse, Foyos did not even like to pray.¹²⁴ For these reasons, he should not be believed.

Up until this point, it is clear that Suner is trying hard to prove the innocence of Antonio by relying on the laurels of religious and legal morality. This became complicated because the people meant to affirm the reasons were so obviously caught up in a web of he-said-she-said. Sadly enough, Foyos understood the weight of his accusations and the fate it could bring to the accused. Perhaps at his core, Foyos understood that this web of gossip in the community could work in his favor

¹²³ Suner speaks on this in his testimony before he lists his "reasons" for why Foyos should not be believed.

¹²⁴ Being a bit quirky here lol serious but like crass. Not because the allegations are not serious, but because of the concern with religious morality. Can it not just be wrong because it is wrong?

because Antonio was black and enslaved and Pedro was 16-years-old and unaccounted for. This, too, offers insight into how the present case constructs a narrative about blackness and hetero-normativity aided by surveillance of the self and others. Although the term is more modern, it accurately explains the budding system of straight [white] male-dominated control in the colonial period. Antonio's owner seemed to understand this to an extent as he tried to pull out many stops. He called on neighbors and locals alike who knew Antonio. These social dynamics differ greatly from Noanama and the Choco region as described in the previous chapter.

This section of the trial also harkens back to a point I raised in the previous chapter on Jose Eusebio Rodriguez: Antonio's owner is far more present in this case than Jose's was in his. This could be attributed to the fact, again, that Suner was an officer of the Holy Office; however, his presence here offers a perspective of Antonio that is supposed to be in service to his innocence. Now, something even more interesting about this is that, although his witnesses and testimonies were meant to aid in Antonio's innocence, Suner implicitly reaffirmed some negative tropes about black enslaved people during the time.

As I mentioned previously, Suner condemned Foyos and Escandell for marrying former prostitutes and for hanging out with people who are of the likes of Antonio Joseph, that is enslaved and of a lower class. The irony in this defense is that although it was to make Foyos and Escandell look bad and, therefore, not able to offer truthful testimony, he did not really say anything about Antonio that differed

from how the court already saw him—he just argued that there was no way Antonio did what he was accused of because Foyos was his mortal enemy and also because Antonio attended prayer and other religious activities. Foyos being Antonio's enemy does not negate Antonio and Pedro's potential encounters; however, it does offer insight into who enslaved black people were congregating with in this period. Not only that, it is reaffirmed that through their status as enslaved, black people were not afforded the benefit of the doubt because they were already seen as deviant and criminal.

With this in mind, I dare to question what purpose the testimony of Antonio's owner served and to what extent his owner was invested in his freedom—a conditional freedom of course because who is to say that if Antonio was found not guilty that Suner would not also inflict his own form of punishment on Antonio. This is something I will return to in the counter-narrative section; however, I wanted to spend some time thinking about the extent to which the testimonies presented on behalf of Antonio actually contributed to him potentially being seen as innocent by the court.

This brings us to the later pages of the document where Antonio's death is announced. Counting the number of pages, only about three were dedicated to getting to the root of his death. Written on October 4th, 1635, the document reads:

[ES] [name illegible -- maybe Pedro? Or is it Guevara?] fue interrogado diga que es lo que save acerca de la muerte de Antonio Joseph esclavo de Pedro Suner y Alguacil del este santo officio. E dixo que el dicho esclavo estava en las prissiones comunes de la presente ysla en compania del testimonio y de otros, y el dicho

esclavo estava de mala gana y se aparto de ellos y se puso aun canton de la prission y al cabo de un rrato lo llamaron y vieron que no rrespondia y fueron a la vuelta de donde estava y lo allaron sentado y la caveca puesta entre las piernas y allaron aquel muerto y ansi avissaron al carcelero y esto es lo que save y puede decir por el juramento que tiene hecho.¹²⁵

[EN] [name illegible] was questioned to say what he knows about the death of Antonio Joseph, the slave of Pedro Suner and Alguacil of this Holy Office. He said that the said slave was in the common prison of the present island in the company of the witness and others. The said slave was in a bad mood and separated from them, moving to a corner of the prison. After a little while, they called him, but he did not respond. They went to the place where he was and found him sitting with his head between his legs, dead. They notified the jailer, and this is what he knows and can say according to the oath he has taken.

This section is pretty sad because, again, it does not seem like there was a lot of time dedicated to trying to figure out what happened to Antonio. His death seems to be not as important, and I would imagine it is because he was already incarcerated anyway. There is something to be said about this though, specifically that it seems as though Antonio was always seen as discardable before the trial, during the trial, and even after. I say this because after this section, his name and the circumstances of his death are not brought up again in the trial.

This silence in the record is reminiscent of the previous case against Jose Eusebio in which I considered how being imprisoned or tortured for a crime he said he did not commit might affect his psyche after a while. I imagine the same can be said of Antonio, who seems to have just died out of nowhere while awaiting his own sentencing. Did he perhaps die because he knew his fate? Did the torturous

¹²⁵ PARES, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," Image 128–129.

treatment he received while imprisoned break his spirit, mind, and body so much so that all that was left was to pass into the next realm? Or was he poisoned or killed by someone in the prison, and, because he was black, enslaved, and on trial for the most nefarious sin of sodomy, no one cared to inquire more about what happened to him?

These questions are important because it again highlights the concerns of the Inquisition and perhaps the hypocrisy of the office's mission. Although they posit a concern with the moral integrity of people in service to a more disciplined or even subjugated society, this case against Pedro and Antonio indicates that perhaps of most importance was that people feared the violence the Inquisition willingly and willfully enacted. As shown in the work of Salgado, the crown or Royal government of Spain did not necessarily hide their enthusiasm for violence when it came to punishing alleged crimes. It was instead masked by a concern with religiosity and saving the souls of the people that they actively sought to manipulate and harm.

So, again, it is evident that regardless if Pedro and Antonio were "guilty" or not, the point of the case was to make an example of them. The narrative established by the case is that, when these types of allegations (i.e., pecado nefando) were brought to the court, the alleged "criminals" were guilty until proven innocent. There was "grace" given by the court, but that grace was meant to make the accused feel comfortable in their inevitable deterioration in prison or, even worse, their death. To make matters worse, do not be black and do not be enslaved.

Because the access to innocence is already forgone by their status as property and not human.

On Pedro and the Appeals Process That Took Time to Materialize

Continuing in the gloom of Antonio's unfortunate passing, the record ends in an even sadder fashion as Pedro's appeal process was essentially denied because he did not produce the proper documents or witnesses to refute the charges he was given. Further, he also wrote to the Holy Inquisition seeking support given his age and the lack of support he had while he was imprisoned. This led to them appointing him a guardian. To make matters worse, on page 144 of the document, Pedro also remarked on his lawyer dying and his father being ill. The longer the case went on, more unintended strife hit the lives of Antonio and, sadly, Pedro.

What we know about Pedro from the case besides him being born out of wedlock to a local notary, he was also attending school and seemingly doing some type of trade work for his father. He also had a brother who was imprisoned at some point, and his mother does not appear until image 118 in the document. When her name does appear, it was in relation to her receiving notification of the case against Pedro Andres. Beyond that, she does not seem to be very present in the case.

Similar to Suner, Pedro's advocate, Dr. Coll, presented capítulos on his behalf. The basis of his defense is interesting because he took a different approach than Suner. Suner does not even refute the claims in the same ways that Pedro's defense does as it relates to the events leading up to the alleged crime. Dr. Coll very

clearly tried to argue that there were no relations at all between Pedro and Antonio, which differs slightly from how Suner relayed the relationships. Funnily, Suner barely mentions Pedro in his defense of Antonio. Pedro's name is only mentioned when he refers to the allegations that Antonio made a sign with his tongue toward Pedro. Other than that, Suner kind of steers clear of the claim that they engaged in pecado nefando. Dr. Coll addressed this a bit in his opening statement by saying that he did not want to contradict the defense of Suner or say the same thing twice.¹²⁶ Important from this though is Dr. Coll worked hard to deny Foyos's claims of relations between Pedro and Antonio.

Before presenting his capítulos, Dr. Coll reaffirmed Pedro's story that he and Antonio were not inside the garita on purpose; it was mere coincidence. He reaffirmed Pedro's initial story to the court that he was inside of the garita because he was upset and running away from his father. While consoling himself inside the garita, Pedro thought he saw his father coming, which made him fearful. While waiting for his dad to come, Antonio allegedly entered the garita at that point and embraced Pedro, but not in the manner that Foyos described. Dr. Coll also alleged that Pedro Andres did not bribe Foyos, and that Foyos made up the lie. He finished

¹²⁶ PARES, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," Image 89.

his opening remarks by affirming what Suner said in his, that Foyos was a known liar and mischief maker and that he had personal vendettas against Pedro and Antonio.

As the forthcoming capítulos show, Foyos seemingly created his own web of lies to instill doubt into the character of Pedro Andres and Antonio Joseph. It is hard not to assume that Foyos did this knowing the harsh punishment associated with such crimes. The audacity was even grander as he had his own possible skeletons and still thought that the crime of pecado nefando de sodomia was more vile than anything he had ever done. This perspective allows for the narrative of non-hetero sex—being punishable by torture, prison, and even death—to prosper. Dr. Coll’s capítulos are found in table 2.¹²⁷

Table 2. Dr. Coll’s Capítulos in Pedro Andres’s Defense

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
1 Pedro pone que el dicho Juan Foyos al paragatero, de officio, es un vagamundo, y de ninguna virtud, ynfame que diran y testificaron personnas dignas de fee y credito que a los dichos de aquel no se puede dar ninguna fee, ni credito y es verdad	Pedro states that the said Juan Foyos, [alparagatero] by trade, is a vagrant, without virtue, and infamous. Persons of good faith and credibility have testified that nothing from him should be trusted or believed, and this is true.
2 Porque dice y pone que el dicho Foyos es un hombre embustero y nobelero, y que siempre an ademas de lo que es sembrando malas voluntades entre perssonas quietas y es verdad	He further states that the said Foyos is a liar and a troublemaker, who constantly sows discord among peaceful people, and this is true.

¹²⁷ PARES, “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll,” Images 89-92.

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
<p>3 Y tem pone que Pedro Andres se fue a buscar su hermano Antonio Corts(?) agenora con otros dos mocos [image 90] y al tiempo y quando se fue dio unas ligas de tafetán al dicho Juan Foyos para que las diesse a Pedro Coll notario, y dicho Pedro Andres torno acabo de poco tiempo por no haver hallado su hermano con una nave flamenca, en compania de los mesmos mocos que havian/ydo, y quando llegaron a la presente ysla no quisieron guiar dicha nave y los dichos mocos los hicieron desembarcar alcabo de algunos dias al pass estrecho de parte de baxo de los molinos de viento lugar remoto y apartado de la villa con guardas de vista por miedo que dicha nave no llenase mal contagioso y haciendo el dicho Pedro Coll notario ydo haver el dicho Pedro Andres en dicho lugar el dicho Pedro Andres pidio al dicho Coll notario si Juan Foyos le havia dado unas ligas de tafetan y dicho Coll notario respondió que no y dicho Pedro Andres callo y es verdad</p>	<p>He also states that Pedro Andres went to search for his brother Antonio Corts, accompanied by two other boys. At the time of his departure, he gave some taffeta ribbons to Juan Foyos to deliver to Pedro Coll, the notary. Later, Pedro Andres returned shortly after because he could not find his brother, who was with a [flamenca] ship. He returned with the same boys, and when they arrived at the present island, they refused to guide the ship. The boys made them disembark after several days at a narrow pass near the windmills, a remote location outside the town, with guards watching the ship due to fear of a contagious disease. Afterward, Pedro Coll, the notary, was asked by Pedro Andres if Foyos had given him the taffeta ribbons. The notary replied that he had not, and Pedro Andres remained silent. This is true.</p>
<p>4 Y tem dice y pone que despues que a el dicho Pedro Andres y a los demas que estaban en su compania los dieron la plática dicho Pedro Andres pidio al dicho Foyos que le diese las ligas que le havia dado y se rrinieron porque no havia dado dichas ligas a quien el havia dicho [image 91] y despues dixo dicho Foyos que las havia puesto emprendas a Pedo Salnany Perayre y despues dicho Pedro Andres las huvo de quitar de dicho Salnany y es verdad</p>	<p>He states that after Pedro Andres and the others received the news, Pedro Andres asked Foyos to give him the ribbons he had promised. They argued because Foyos had not given the ribbons to whom he had said. Foyos then claimed that he had given the ribbons to Pedro Salnany Perayre. Pedro Andres later retrieved them from Salnany. This is true.</p>
<p>5 Y tem pone que alcabo de diez, o, doce dias despues que dicho Pedro Andres desembarco de la nave en que havia venido de genona el dicho Foyos lo acusso de dicha maldad y es verdad</p>	<p>He states that ten or twelve days after Pedro Andres disembarked from the ship he had come on, Foyos accused him of wrongdoing, and this is true.</p>

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
<p>6 Y te pone que estando en la prision Antonio Cortis hermano de parte de madre del dicho Pedro Andres, el dicho Foyos cada dia traya buenas y rracones al dicho Antonio Cortis de su muger poniendo mal entre aquellos por las quales cada dia que dicho Foyos yba a la dicha prission el dicho Antonio Cortis estava desesperado de las nuevas que dicho Foyos le traya por lo qual alcabo de pocos dias que dicho Cortis salio de la prission pego de punal ladas a su muger por la varruga de todo lo qual fue causa dicho Foyos y fue [illegible] servido que no le hiciese da no alguno, y [illegible] la libro porque no devio de tener culpa, por la qual dicho Cortis se rretiro a [something?] senora de Jesus y despues se huvo de yr a Ytalia y el dicho Foyos es causa de dicha ynquietud, y como a procurado ynquietar el dicho Cortis, agora tambien ha procurado. Inquitar a su hermano Pedro Andres y es verdad</p>	<p>He states that while Antonio Cortis, Pedro Andres's maternal brother, was in prison, Foyos constantly brought news and rumors to Antonio about his wife, sowing discord between them. As a result, every day when Foyos visited the prison, Antonio was in despair over the news. A few days later, when Antonio was released from prison, he stabbed his wife with a dagger, causing a rift, and this was due to Foyos's influence. Foyos was warned not to cause harm, and the woman was spared because she should not have been blamed. Antonio then withdrew to the Lady of Jesus [perhaps a church?] and later fled to Italy. Foyos is the cause of this unrest and has now also sought to disturb Pedro Andres.</p>
<p>7 El dicho Pedro Andres en compania de Pedro Lorencano y dicho Juan Foyos a donde estava retirado de Antonio [image 92] Cortis por las punaladas havia pegado a su muger el dicho Pedro Andres se rrinio con el dicho Foyos diciendole que el era causa que su hermano Antonio Cortis estava des atentado de su cassa, que si el fuese hombre como dicho Foyos que se lo havia de pagar y es verdad</p>	<p>Pedro Andres, accompanied by Pedro Lorencano and Juan Foyos, went to where Antonio Cortis was hiding after stabbing his wife. Pedro Andres argued with Foyos, telling him that he was the reason his brother Antonio was away from home. He said that if Foyos were a man, he would have to pay for what he had caused. This is true.</p>
<p>8 Y tem pone que dicho Foyos por ser como es hombre des hechado y malo se casso con muger publica ramera como en efecto esta cassado y es verdad</p>	<p>He states that Foyos, because of his nature as a bad and wicked man, married a public woman, a prostitute, and this is true.</p>
<p>9 Y tem pone que el dicho Juan Foyos por lo semblante es un hombre vinoso, y debaca mano y es estado visto algunas veces</p>	<p>He states that Juan Foyos is a drunkard, always in a drunken state, and has been seen many times drunk.</p>

Capítulos en ES	Capítulos in EN
borracho y es un blasfemo y jugador y es verdad	He is also a blasphemer and a gambler, and this is true.
10 Y tem pone que por ser el dicho Foyos tan vil y de shechado tuvo tan mal animo y traca que abrio la cassa mata del Cavallero de St. Pedro de donde hurto y truco(?) hastas Polvora, balas y cuchares de cargar las bonbaldas que estavan en dicha cassa mata y despues el y otros vendieron las suso dichas cosas, y visto que se yba descubriendo se huyo de la presente ysla y es verdad	And he claims that, due to the said Foyos being so vile and deceitful, he had such a bad disposition and temper that he opened the weapon chest of the Knight of St. Peter, from which he stole and [truco?] gunpowder, bullets, and ramrods for the cannons that were in the said chest. Afterward, he and others sold the aforementioned items. And seeing that it was being discovered, he fled from this present island, and this is true.
11 Y tem pone que Pedro Andres es un moco de menor hedad de algunos diez y seis o diez y siete anos poco mas o menos, y es moco muy bien criado y siempre ha ydo al estudio de leer y escribir y gramatica y es verdad	And he claims that Pedro Andres is a young boy, of minor age, around sixteen or seventeen years old, give or take a little. He is a very well-behaved boy who has always attended study to learn to read and write, and grammar, and this is true.
12 Y tem pone que todas las dichas cosas son verdaderas sobre los quales capitulos pide y supplica a V.R. Pedro sean recibidos dichos testimonios en la forma acostumbada, con protestación que pueda, anadir corregir, y enmendar en las susodichas deffenssas, lo que conuendra a su derecho y justicia que de supplicat omni melori modos que licet Altissimus	And he claims that all of the aforementioned things are true, concerning which chapters he asks and petitions to Your Reverence that these testimonies be received in the customary form, with the protestation that he may add, correct, and amend the aforementioned defenses as it may suit his right and justice, and with the request that all be done in the best manner, as allowed by the Highest.

What is interesting about the capitulos presented by Dr. Coll is that they reveal more about Pedro Andres's personal life. In particular, in capitulo 3 we learn

that Pedro was looking for his brother Antonio Cortis with two of his friends. While looking for Cortis, Pedro and his friends also encountered Foyos, a time at which Pedro gave Foyos some silk ribbons to give to his dad the notary. When Pedro asked his dad if Foyos had given him the ribbons, his dad responded, “No,” to Pedro’s surprise. As a result, as divulged in capitulo 4, Pedro approached Foyos about returning the ribbons that he had given to him. An argument ensued because Foyos had instead given the ribbons to Pedro Salnany Perayre. Eventually Pedro Andres retrieved the ribbons from Perayre and that was the end of that saga.

The argument between Pedro and Foyos picks up in capitulos 6 and 7 as Dr. Coll reveals a plot by Foyos to cause discord in the life of Pedro’s brother, Cortis. It is also reaffirmed how the gossip stirred up by Foyos led to the demise of unassuming others. In capitulo 6, we learn that, while Cortis was in prison, Foyos would come every day to tell him lies about his wife. When he was finally released from prison a few days later, Cortis went to his wife and stabbed her based on the allegations that Foyos had been bringing him while he was incarcerated. Cortis eventually learned they were all lies and ran to la “Senora de Jesus y despues se huvo de yr a Ytalia.”¹²⁸ Before he left for Italy though, Pedro Andres, Pedro Lorencano, and Juan Foyos went to find Cortis at Senora de Jesus. While there, Pedro and Foyos were described as

¹²⁸ [“He ran to the lady of Jesus [I am assuming this is a church?] and after he fled to Italy.”]
Source: PARES, “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll,” Image 91.

arguing, with Pedro blaming Foyos for causing discord, telling him “si el fuese hombre como dicho Foyos que se lo havia de pagar.”¹²⁹

There are a few things happening here but I want to start first with the phrase “si el fuese hombre.” This sentiment lies at the heart of why Pedro, Foyos, and Antonio had to appear in court to begin with. Because Pedro and Antonio were accused of doing the most nefarious sin that a man could do—having sex that was not “normal” with another man. This idea of what is “normal” sex stems from the construction of masculinity via the archetype of an “ideal man.” This is critical as it underscores the narrative produced via the case—that the act of sodomy degenerates the idea of man because of the assumed passivity. We can think of Pete Sigal’s chapter “(Homo)Sexual Desire and Masculine Power in Colonial Latin America: Notes toward an Integrated Analysis” as it offers definitions of identity and sexual desire in relation to the idea of being a passive or active sexual partner.¹³⁰

Segal offers a comparison of vaginal sex being regarded as almost the epitome of sex because its intended outcome is reproduction. Any other kinds of sex, therefore, were inadequate because not only did they not lead to reproduction,

¹²⁹ [“If Foyos were a man, he would have to pay for what he did.”] *Source*: PARES, “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll,” Image 92.

¹³⁰ Pete Sigal, ed., *Infamous Desire: Male Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

but they also desecrated the confines of what was considered “man” (active) or “woman” (passive). This is where the active/passive dyad stems from as the person seen on top (whether male or female) was always seen as the aggressor or the active partner and the person on bottom was seen as passive because they had someone on top of them and, obviously, wanted to be penetrated. This speaks to the construction of hetero-patriarchy in that the active person, by law, should only be a man, dissuading women from being the active partner.

This image reaffirms the idea that the man (i.e., white) should always be on top. Sigal also puts forth the argument that, although scholars have contended that only active people acted on desire, there is a need in the literature to consider the desires of the passive person. In any case, Sigal states the active/passive dyad was wrapped up in notions of power driving how people acted on desire. These notions put forth by Sigal, I would argue, are what emboldened Foyos to make the allegations that he did against Pedro and Antonio. His own manhood was potentially threatened by this young teenage boy, and to avenge that he had to come for the “manhood” of that person also.

It is obvious that on the two occasions during which Pedro addressed Foyos “as a man,” Foyos saw it as disrespect. Again, this was probably exacerbated by Pedro only being a 16–17 year old who seemed to take on a lot of responsibility. He was brokering deals for his father and traveling back and forth by ship between Ibiza

and Mallorca as described in capitulos 3 and 5 (see fig. 4).¹³¹ He was also described as being well behaved and a good student as he was studying grammar and also how to read and write as discussed in capitulo 11. And this all despite the fact that he was doubly known as a bastard and drunk. This is presented against a backdrop of Foyos being seen as vile, deceitful, a thief, and drunk himself as described in capitulos 9 and 10.



Figure 4. Von Valentz; Valentia, Murcia cum Insulis Majorca, Minorca et Yuica, 1651.

¹³¹ Figure 4 provides a spatial understanding of where Pedro was travelling back and forth from. The map shows the neighboring islands of Yvica (Ibiza) and Majorca (Mallorca). Pedro was originally from Ibiza but based on the document he spent a lot of time in Mallorca as well.

The witnesses brought in on behalf of Pedro included Pedro Antonio Cambrils, an 18-year-old who testified to knowing Pedro through school and to knowing about Foyos antagonizing Cortis, Pedro's brother, at the prison. As it related to the character of Foyos, Cambrils said he could not comment. Another witness, Francisco Mari, who was a hosier, was asked about capitulo 10 to which he responded he did not see the incident with his own eyes but he had heard that Foyos fled Mallorca; when he returned he went to church and offered services to the community.¹³² More interesting testimony came from Jacinto Nicolas de Domingo, who was asked to also comment on the capitulos related to the character of Foyos to which he repeatedly responded that he did not know Foyos to be vile or dishonest; on the contrary, he found him to be very honorable. He also claimed to know nothing about Foyos being the reason Cortis stabbed his wife.

On the other hand there was one witness, Pedro Lorencano who was a soldier who testified to knowing Foyos as a restless person.¹³³ He also testified that he could confirm capitulo 4 in which it was alleged that Foyos stole some ribbons meant for Pedro's father. To top it off, he confirmed that he knew Foyos to be a drunkard also, many times seeing him drunk by the marina. Pedro Jover de Andres, a

¹³² PARES, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," Image 95-96.

¹³³ Original translation "ynquieto [inquieto]." *Source:* PARES, "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," Image 98.

35-year old living in Mallorca confirmed that he, too, knew Foyos to be a lying man, but he could not comment on other characteristics. Most of the ten witnesses present—besides Lorencano, Jover de Andres, and another soldier—asserted that they did not know Juan Foyos to be the way he was described. This obviously does not work in favor of Pedro's defense as they seemed unable to prove that Pedro did not do what he was accused of.

The testimonies reveal just how hard it was to prove that one did not commit a sexual sin such as sodomy. It was clear in the defenses of Dr. Coll and Suner that the only way to prove Pedro and Antonio's innocence was to highlight how Foyos's character was less than favorable and, therefore, not trustworthy in assessing the character of others. On the surface, this did not seem to work in their favor as some of the testimonies seem to hold Foyos in high regard. On a deeper level, I wonder how much of that was due to the fact that people were scared of Foyos coming for their families in the same way he seemed to come for Pedro and Antonio. That was a sticky part of this trial as most of the people were neighbors or locals who knew of each other. The allegations of nefarious sin already marking those accused as guilty could unintentionally invite coercion, mainly because people probably did not want to be associated with such allegations. This is evidenced by the people who appeared in the beginning of the trial who commented that they sought out religious figures after hearing the allegations because they themselves did not want to be guilty by association.

These kinds of sentiments foment an environment of surveillance as there was not much space for the truth to be fully known. Unfortunately for Pedro and Antonio, there were no cameras or phones around, so there was not an opportunity for unbiased evidence to be presented.¹³⁴ The lack of avenues to present evidence, I think, also contributed to people being railroaded into confessions that had a hard time being appealed.¹³⁵ Although the court allowed Pedro the legal amount of time to present his own appeals, the tone of the presiding inquisitors presented a sense of urgency and forcefulness in wrapping the case up. Even with Pedro noting that he did not have access to the proper resources to defend himself because he was a minor far away from the home, it meant much of nothing to the court. Pedro was eventually charged with the crime of "pecado nefando de sodomia." This landed him a sentence of ten years in the galleys of the Inquisition. He also was told he would be paraded around the city on a donkey with his crimes read aloud to act as an example to others. As if this was not enough, he also was given 200 lashes and banned for life from his home in Yvica.

There seemed to be some upside in his case though. I came across another document from the AHN in Madrid in which the appeals case was presented by

¹³⁴ Unbiased in the sense that there was not another way to present evidence. It was just based on the stories told by others.

¹³⁵ See Tamar Herzog, *Upholding Justice: Society, State, and the Penal System in Quito*, Illustrated ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

another lawyer on behalf of Pedro.¹³⁶ I was not able to transcribe/read the whole thing, but the appeals seemed to be promising. In one part I could make out, it seemed as though they had revoked or rescinded the charges brought against Pedro. If this is the case, his story seemed to end there as it relates to the historical record. However, even if so, the narratives produced via the case about the deviancy of black [enslaved] people and the sinfulness of non-hetero sex are reaffirmed by the outcomes of the case. Despite Pedro's age and the initial coercion of his confession, he was still found guilty. To me, the verdict of the case was guaranteed once it was presented that two men were potentially engaging in activities that two men should not have been. This animates the narratives produced by the case as the underlying goal was to maintain a hetero-patriarchal society.

For the counter-narrative, all that we really know is that Pedro received a sentence at the end of the initial trial. The despair he felt there and his fight for his innocence is palpable. We can think about the necessity of intimacy in those moments and the desire not only to trust someone but to have someone believe in what you are saying. With this in mind, we can transition into the counter-narrative to consider the potential love between Antonio and Pedro that came to a head after their encounter in the garita. This brings us back to *el Cercano* as our story can not fully take shape in the confines of the Holy Court.

¹³⁶ "Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll," PARES, accessed August 28, 2025, <https://pares.mcu.es:443/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/3747594>.

A Counter-Narrative That Holds Intimacy Close

Before getting into the creation of our counter-narrative, I want to briefly return to the limits this kind of method presents. Although I seek to “uncover” intimacy in the archive, I want to reaffirm that, although a truth of their own, this counter-narrative is its own type of fiction, too. This narrative is not meant to impose our modern understandings of relating but to offer a rereading of the case that grants Antonio and Pedro the innocence they both so desperately defended. So how do we recuperate or create a counter-narrative to the one constructed via the case? I suggest we first start with the notion that Pedro and Antonio were two individuals with distressing personal lives—Pedro, known as the drunken bastard child of a local notary of the same name, and Antonio, known as the black slave of an officer of the Holy Inquisition. Although we may think the two would not share the same space, many of the witnesses, including Antonio’s owner Pedro Suner, remark on “slaves and other delinquents” hanging out together in the shadows of the night. Even these gatherings were seen as depraved or sinful places because the people who frequented them were marked that way. This, too, produces a narrative that people belonging to lower or unprotected classes are inherently criminal.

In response to this blanket criminality, I propose a story of love and intimacy that transcends the boundaries of right and wrong. Although I do not know Antonio and Pedro, I can only assume that their admission to being inside the garita at all signals an intimate knowing of each other. As mentioned earlier in the chapter,

Antonio and Pedro alleged that they were not engaged in sexual intercourse. They insist that they were actually engaged in a physical altercation stemming from Antonio disrupting Pedro's peace while he was inside the garita. With this, there were also some aspects of witness testimony that Pedro and Antonio did not necessarily refute. For example, when Juan Foyos relayed his account, he mentioned being concerned about what was happening because the swords of each person were outside of the garita. So, to him, if they were fighting, why did Pedro and Antonio not have their swords with them?

I want to start with this piece because it suggests a lot about how men in particular were expected to interact with each other, in jest and in fighting. The questioning of their swords not being present is also complicated given Pedro said he was running away from his father, and, again, Antonio was an enslaved black man who probably did not have a sword. So, although their weapons not being present raised some eyebrows, it did not seem too out of the ordinary. We also get a glimpse into how convoluted Foyos's story was as he attempted to paint a completely different interpretation of what unfolded between Pedro and Antonio. Foyos's account also makes Dr. Coll's arguments more pressing as I am inclined to believe Foyos potentially instigated the entire interaction between Pedro and Antonio because of his own personal vendettas.

This potential web of lies spun by Foyos also marks our love story as just as tragic as the testimonies relayed in court, especially considering the ages of Pedro

and Antonio, which complicates the present counter-narrative. Mainly because the way we understand consent and power is different from how Pedro and Antonio lived it. Although Antonio was significantly older than Pedro, he was also an enslaved man. This bears to question how much power was exercised by Antonio in this instance? Even more, when the prosecutor questioned the witnesses, this notion is evident, as he repeatedly asks, "si el dicho negro ha tenido acto carnal con el y si estado de voluntad suya, o, por violencia."¹³⁷ Clearly, they are trying to figure out if it was an act of pleasure or of sexual violence, and, ironically enough, all of the witnesses suggest that they could not tell. This also reveals a lot about the faultiness of the Inquisition and their processes of faith—even with people self-policing and snitching on their neighbors, the truth can only really be known by the people involved.

This harkens to Robert O’Hara’s play, *Insurrection: Holding History*, in particular the few scenes that involve Ron, the PhD student traveling to the past from the future, and Hammet, an enslaved man on the plantation that Ron’s great-great-grandfather TJ used to live on.¹³⁸ In their first encounter, Hammet is described as blowing into Ron’s mouth. The other moment is when the two actually share a

¹³⁷ “Proceso de Fe de Pedro Andrés Coll,” PARES, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://pares.mcu.es:443/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/3748025>, Image 11. [English translation: if the said negro had carnal acts with him and if it was voluntary or with violence.]

¹³⁸ Robert O’Hara, *Insurrection: Holding History*, First Edition (Theatre Communications Group, 1998).

kiss, which leads to Ron fainting and returning to the present. I want to highlight this moment in the play here to show how scholars have written about moments of intimacy among people that we would probably not expect. This is not to make a comment on whether the alleged interaction between Pedro and Antonio was “acceptable” but, rather, to point to how these moments can be understood as people seeking each other not only for intimacy but also perhaps for understanding. Ron did not seek out Hammet, but it is clear that Hammet saw in Ron what he could not find on the plantation—an intimacy of knowing that can only be revealed through getting close to another.

Again, this case involved a 30-year old enslaved black person and a 16-year old teenage boy. Even in Dr. Coll’s own testimony, he said that Antonio “embraced” Pedro, although not in the same way as described by Foyos.¹³⁹ So, what if this love story is similar to that of Venus in Hartman’s two acts?¹⁴⁰ Perhaps it is a love story in the sense that, given the familiarity that Pedro and Antonio seemed to have with each other, perhaps what they had to give was love to each other—affection, in a nonsexual sense, or intimacy, and the permission to be close to another for just a second. These feelings seemed to be less important in the grand scheme of the

¹³⁹ Original Spanish: “y se abraco con el dicho Pedro Andres y no es de la manera que testifica dicho Foyos” (82).

¹⁴⁰ Discussed in depth in chapter 3.

court case. The Inquisition was prepared to see them as guilty because they could not look past the potential sexual “sin.” As I have argued elsewhere in this chapter, this was purposeful because it was in service to solidifying a hetero-patriarchal society. The good thing is that, in this counter narrative, those systems cease to exist. Because what is the point of fantasy if not freedom from the current restraints of a lived life?

To reiterate, this chapter has traversed the meanings of surveillance as it relates to people living under the Spanish Inquisition telling on their neighbors in service to protecting themselves and moral order. Similarly to what we see in chapter 1, I suggest the narrative established via this case is one similar to that of the case from Colombia—that black enslaved people were seen as sexually deviant, more than likely violent, and capable of causing chaos in their quotidian lives and at the systemic level. Although many could not confirm if what Foyos said actually happened or was “true,” many of them still aired on the side of condemning the action. As I argue, this is made possible by the surveillance and moral order established by the Inquisition.

So, we are back nestled in our time traveling super-steamer, *el Cercano*. I ask Pedro and Antonio where they may want to go and what people would they want to see? To what place can we carry their souls and trial record for a final moment of solace. At this moment, I extend the question to the rest of the passengers aboard our ship that is existing in a land where there is lots of green and shrubbery. In other

words, this Earth had the opportunity to survive and replenish itself. Not only are palm trees still only existing in the place they were first birthed, but rivers and oceans are relatively untouched and growing through a cycle of time untouched by large forms of human catastrophe. The water is really blue. Human connection is still globalized, and, yes, Twitter is just twitter in its prime. Speaking of prime, I am not sure if ethical delivery methods have been tackled, but Amazon and billionaires do not exist here either. It is funny because none of these things really mean much to the passengers aboard the ship. They are only here because I chose to bother them in their final resting places (i.e., the texts I got to meet them in).

Several questions emerge. Where would they want to go and what people would they want to see? To what place can we carry their souls and trial record for a final moment of solace? Perhaps, for Pedro, it is a trip to the Balearic Sea near the shores of Ibiza for one last chat with his mother. And for Antonio and Jose Eusebio, perhaps it is to their loved ones, to tell them goodbye. For Manzano, perhaps it is to an Old World before the New. For Ron and TJ, it may be to a time and place where Nat Turner did not have to rebel. And for Chango, maybe is to a time when the Orishas were first birthed.

For now, we get to stay on *el Cercano*, the time-traveling super steamer that has carried us through the worlds of these different people. It is beautiful to think about the final pages of this chapter holding us all in a warm embrace.

Before our mobile archive arrives at the final repository found between these pages, I want reaffirm the necessity and perhaps, value, of reading the case against Antonio alongside the case against Jose in chapter 1. Although oceans and decades apart in the timing of their trials, we see black intimacies rendered as criminal through different legal mechanisms. Both trials show how gender—or notions of what constitutes man, woman, boy, girl—become avenues to begin constructing an image of what is against the norm. In both cases, black enslaved men were seen by witnesses and lawyers alike as deviant, lascivious, and maybe even manipulative. This emphasizes the colonial common sense that Stoler argues lives on in historical archives—whether in Mallorca or Novita, there was central understanding that black people found in intimate situations required extra scrutiny under the law. This logic necessitates some breathing space, that which can be found in literary worlds. Onward to one more set of counter-narrative driven ocean travel, this time through some literary worlds only after we have boarded an actual ship.

Chapter 3: Black Queer Intimacies, Slave Ships, and Literary Redress in the [Spanish] Black Atlantic

The *Marie-S raphique* was a slaving vessel created in 1764 in Nantes owned by a Frenchman named Jacques Gruel. The ship took multiple voyages between 1769 and 1774. On August 16th, 1772, Captain Jean-Baptise Gaugy Fautrel led a crew of thirty-nine people to Loango, a state situated in the Kingdom of Kongo, where they acquired 350 African captives. The end destination was Cap-Francis, and the journey across the Middle Passage lasted about fifty-one days. By the end of the trip, seven captives died along with two crew members. Of the surviving 343 captives, there is a record of two enslaved males who disembarked on January 6th, 1773, in Saint-Marc where they eventually ran away.¹⁴¹

For the two captives, information about who they are and what travel was like for them is limited; however, the Slave Voyages database provides their sex, heights, where they embarked/disembarked, date of travel, and the fate of the captives and the vessel itself. According to the database, one of the captives (African ID: 200070) was 49.50 inches tall or roughly four feet. The other (African ID: 200071) was 56.50 inches tall or about four feet, seven inches.¹⁴² From this alone, I am

¹⁴¹ Slave Voyages, *The Marie-Seraphique* [Voyage ID: 30968], accessed April 1, 2025, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>.

¹⁴² Slave Voyages, *The Marie-Seraphique*.

inclined to believe the two runaways were younger given their heights. This is of interest to me because it offers insight into the stakes of them running away. Perhaps they were two young people who had heard about the horrors of slavery in the New World and, because of this, decided that bondage was scarier than running away. Although it is difficult to truly know how old they were because of limited information, I mention these two captives as a way to ground the analysis of this chapter. What is known about them—their sex, height, and voyage information—is what intrigues me.

We know there were two relatively short male captives who ran away after disembarking in Saint-Marc. I wonder if the two captives knew the seven captives who did not make it. Did the two captives connect with anyone else on the ship or with the people who died? How did their fate of running away become noted in the historical record? Although the answers to these questions are unknown, I invite anyone inclined to step into a moment where these two captives can be imagined as partners in crime. What if, in this moment, there was a consideration of the conditions aboard the *Marie-Séraphique* that reaffirmed over and over again for the two captives that running away was the only solution. Perhaps they met in the sex-segregated holds of the *Marie-Séraphique* and made a promise to each other to run away from the conditions enslavement ensured. What if this promise could only be held and fulfilled because of the intimacy sex-segregated holds fomented?

The little information known provides a deeper look into the conditions aboard the ships and the captives forced onto them. Although it is not recorded in information known about the two captive males, it could be assumed the conditions of the journey and the looming reality of enslavement itself fueled their desire to run away. The two males being recorded as running away on the same day after being disembarked on the same ship is what animates some of the main concerns of this chapter—an attention to the relationships formed between captives as a result of the separation by sex and, subsequently, how captives sustained intimacy among themselves once arrived in the New World.

These explorations also lend themselves to what I have been calling queer intimacies. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the word “queer” is often used to refer to someone’s sexuality, but another way queer is understood is queer as nonnormative, disruptive, or as antithetical to hegemonic structures. Queer intimacies, then, seeks to challenge what is seen as “normal” as it relates to the relationships between people and the scholarship that affirms certain versions of history. I see queer intimacies as a necessary logic to understand the meanings produced by images of ship diagrams and literary texts alike, especially as it relates to how people were divided by sex on the ship and how this translated to relationship formation in the New World.

Elsewhere, scholars Phillip L. Hammack, David M. Frost, and Sam D. Hughes have crafted a definition of queer intimacies. Their definition includes seven axes

that speak to relationship diversity. They write that intimacy may occur (a) in relationships featuring any combination of cisgender, transgender, or nonbinary identities; (b) with people of multiple gender identities across the life course; (c) in multiple relationships simultaneously with consent; (d) in relationships characterized by consensual asymmetry, power exchange, or role-play; (e) in the absence or limited experience of sexual or romantic desire; (f) in the context of a chosen rather than biological family; and (g) in other possible forms yet unknown.¹⁴³

I want to expand this definition and pay particular attention to the other possible forms not yet known. Although I pay attention to the intimacy fomented among people, in this chapter, I also hone more on the intimacy of knowing. The intimacy of knowing describes the moments that captives relied on each other's knowledge when passing through the Middle Passage. The transatlantic journey was a mystery in many ways to both captives and crews as the Atlantic is an unpredictable space. There were some instances of very few captives who were dispossessed from Africa across the Atlantic, only to return to Africa and perhaps

¹⁴³ Phillip L. Hammack, David M. Frost, and Sam D. Hughes, "Queer Intimacies: A New Paradigm for the Study of Relationship Diversity," *The Journal of Sex Research* 56, no. 4–5 (June 13, 2019): 556–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2018.1531281>.

back across the Atlantic, living long enough to talk about the journey.¹⁴⁴ The mental and physical violence of the journey created a knowing that could only be understood by the people forced aboard those ships. Seeing people in this way, whether welcomed or not, cultivates a sense of closeness and intimacy as people were quite literally made to lay stacked on each other. To mitigate the physical discomfort, we can also think about the methods captives used to maintain a sense of mental and emotional fortitude.

As I described in the Introduction, another way we see this intimacy of knowing unraveled is in moments where enslaved black people were planning and dreaming up their freedom from servitude. This sense of faith and belief in liberty was grounded in a fierce loyalty to God and sometimes, by extension, Christianity or Catholicism. I am making the distinction here between belief in a higher power and devotion to an organized religion because, while places of worship were often meeting grounds to create a blueprint, the place did not necessarily define the relationships or knowledge that was shared in them.

We see this in O'Hara's play as the belief in God kept the enslaved people on Mo'Tel's plantation tethered to their master plan to make it to Jerusalem. They were doing their labor in the fields while also singing and dancing about the death of their

¹⁴⁴ Here we might consider Olaudah Equiano, Venture Smith, Oluale Kossola (also known as Cudjoe Lewis), or Florence Hall. These individuals possessed a knowledge of the transatlantic journey that many captives did not have or were not also able to share.

master leading to them being able to finally flee. These sentiments were not expressed in vain as the lyrics involved prayer and a call to God to keep them protected. This is contrasted in the poems of Manzano as he instead reflected a deep devotion to God and also evangelizing to people who seemed to be lost or not sure how to rely on God. His poems reflect a type of preaching based in the love and freedom that he found from believing in God through organized religion. Even still, he was a rebel in his own right which made his reverence for God and Catholicism that much more formidable when creating art that was seen as radical by the Spanish government.

Despite the differences in how Manzano and O'Hara's characters expressed their relationship to God and religion, they all seem to revel in the opportunities to share that love and faith intimately—to share with others a knowing that can only be understood through deep and concerted vulnerability. Enslaved people did this perhaps hoping for freedom but not relying on it. This only accentuates the prowess of intimately knowing the other.

Queer intimacies, and by extension the intimacy of knowing, also provides a pathway to imagine the two male captives from the *Marie-S raphique* as partners in crime, shackled together below deck, exchanging dreams on where they will run off to and what they will change their names to once they arrive—names that will likely remain unknown. Wistful whispers of two known names can be heard from the sex-segregated holds of another ship as well, the *Recovery*, where two young girls

named Venus are brought to life by Hartman in two acts. Queer intimacies marks the specters of the two male captives and the two girls named Venus as essential to our understanding of intimate connections on the Atlantic.

This discussion of queer intimacies, the slave ship, and by extension, the Middle Passage sets us on our way to wrapping up our own ocean travel. As mentioned briefly in the Introduction, this dissertation's main mission is to traverse the worlds of different black enslaved people to construct narratives that counteract the ones we come to know them through. Even more, I long to form an archive of sorts—one that brings together disparate texts to emphasize the vastness and uniqueness of the African Diaspora and the queer intimacies that sustain it. Although some of the forthcoming texts discussed are literary—and, therefore, not necessarily true—what they reveal is a desire by the authors to allow “the black characters [to] speak in the first person; they narrate their own personal experiences. As they do so, the reader understands their lives, not through mediation or from a distance as defined by an omniscient narrator, but from the perspective of the characters.”¹⁴⁵ Put another way, these stories become another avenue to represent “truth.”

¹⁴⁵ Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Changó, Decolonizing the African Diaspora*, trans. Jonathan Tittler (New York London: Routledge, 2021).

With this in mind, the preoccupations of this chapter and dissertation become more clear—by bridging historical documents with literary texts, I seek to allow the black people in each text to narrate their own personal experiences, thereby creating a counter-narrative to the dominant ones that animate our understanding of transatlantic slavery. To do so, we must first get to know them intimately. Although the information on the two males from the *Marie-Seraphique* is limited, I hope to illuminate the conditions they faced in the Middle Passage through connecting the details of their existence and the voyage with the stories of Ron and TJ from Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection: Holding History*, Chango and the Muntu from Olivella's *Chango, el gran putas*, and Juan Francisco Manzano, a formerly enslaved black man who wrote an autobiography and poems based on his life in Cuba.

Through combining these sources, I set to close the circle on our counter-narrative driven travel from chapters one and two in which we learn about two enslaved black men, Jose Eusebio Rodriguez from the Choco in Colombia and Antonio Joseph from Mallorca, Spain. With Jose and Antonio now aboard our super steamer *el Cercano*, the possibilities of literary texts in providing us with ready-made counter-narratives to the narratives established via historical documents is emphasized. Thus, the discussion of literary texts in this chapter is to board our super steamer with characters who can provide a different perspective on intimacy to the ones we saw in chapters 1 and 2.

Marie-Séraphique and the Recovery

A term that grounds my use of queer intimacies to explore the relationships between captives is “shipmates.” Shipmates appears across many works related to the transatlantic period. In works written about the time, notably Marcus Rediker’s 2007 book *The Slave Ship: A Human History*,¹⁴⁶ shipmate is used to refer to men and women aboard the ship together, people forced to recreate kinship bonds after being stripped away from the only place and people they knew as home.¹⁴⁷ An example of this is Rediker’s discussion of captives’ responding to conditions on board the ship by revolting, holding hunger strikes, or even throwing themselves overboard. Rediker’s exploration of the slave ship is pivotal in its depiction and explanation of life aboard for captives. Tinsley’s work redefined the way we read shipmate by highlighting other ways in which enslaved people referred to the special, nonbiological bonds between people of the same-sex aboard slave ships. This pushes a bit beyond Rediker’s work as Tinsley lingers on meanings of desire for *mati* women.

Mati, Tinsley writes, literally translates to “shipmate that survived the Transatlantic journey with me.”¹⁴⁸ Shipmate becomes a fluid, flexible term to

¹⁴⁶ Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ We can consider Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers: Emerging Black Identities in the Río de La Plata* (Albuquerque: UNM Press, 2015), here, too.

¹⁴⁸ Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*, 192.

describe what unfolded in slave holds of the black queer Atlantic, the “same-sex eroticism: a feeling of, feeling for the kidnapped that asserted the sentience of the bodies that slavers attempted to transform into brute matter.”¹⁴⁹ Enslaved people defied the terms of their enslavement by feeling for each other and holding each other's desires in the face of uncertainty and perilous conditions.

Holding the desires of others harkens back to the two male captives mentioned in the introduction because, as Hartman writes about Venus, in the words of Das, “the knowledge of the other marks me.”¹⁵⁰ The knowledge of the two male captives' presence on the Slave Voyages database marks me—thinking about the life they potentially lived before boarding the *Marie-Séraphique*, during travel on the ship, and after running away from it, haunts me. Even more, I am enticed to linger in the unknown of what their relationship was to each other and how or if they communicated their desires. If it is not already clear, I am not interested in affirming truths on behalf of the two runaways. On the contrary, I am attempting to gauge the intimacy of knowing between the two through Hartman's frameworks of a “recombinant narrative” and critical fabulation. Although this essay is far from doing the needed groundwork that leads to a recombinant narrative, I find it important to

¹⁴⁹ Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, nos. 2–3 (2008): 191–215, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2007-030>, 199.

¹⁵⁰ Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 4.

read the two male captives alongside Venus. The purpose of this is to bring histories of enslaved people to the present and future to reimagine them as historical figures. I do this without needing the people to be named because a name does not change the facts of their fate, although a name would provide a way to search for them beyond the archive in different parts of the Atlantic world.

Hartman arrived in the Atlantic world after mining the archive of slavery in search of Venus in her essay, "Venus in Two Acts." Hartman's titular character, Venus, is both identifiable and unidentifiable by slavery's archives. Part of Hartman's argument is the question of who Venus is cannot be answered because she is arguably anyone, everyone, and no one. Hartman's centering of Venus also highlights that, although we do not know a lot about Venus, her presence offers another perspective on violence and the transformation of captives into "commodities and corpses."¹⁵¹ When it comes to locating Venus in the archive, Hartman sees the archive as a "death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, . . . an asterisk in the grand narrative of history."¹⁵² Venus, a person in the archive, is also a caricature of black women and their bodies; what Hartman points to is the inability of the archive to paint a full picture of these lives with "names

¹⁵¹ Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 2.

¹⁵² Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 2.

tossed-off as insults and crass jokes” because oftentimes that is all that they are.¹⁵³

Hartman’s goal in centering Venus was to tell the story of two enslaved girls without perpetuating this violence of the archive. Although this task is nearly “impossible” given the incomplete narrative of Venus in the historical record, Hartman is clear it is critical to redress the violence of the archive by listening to or reading for what could potentially be a biography of the enslaved.

To create this biography, as I explained in the Introduction, Hartman offers critical fabulation as a methodology that involves a weaving together of sometimes disparate parts through archival methods, narrative fiction, and critical social theory. As Hartman stated, the purpose of this methodology is to “imagine what might have happened,” which is arguably a form of engaging the archive through queering as it resists the limits of the archive in telling Venus’ story.^{154 155} We arrive at a recombinant narrative as the outcome from doing critical fabulation. A recombinant narrative, Hartman described, “loops the strands of incommensurate accounts and which weaves present, past, and future in retelling the girl’s story and in narrating the time of slavery as our present.”¹⁵⁶ Although the narrative may not be true, it

¹⁵³ Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 2.

¹⁵⁴ Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 11.

¹⁵⁵ This too, again, can be seen as Hartman is attempting to take to task what it means to intimately know Venus and also what it means for the reader to intimately know Venus beyond slavery’s archive.

¹⁵⁶ Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 12.

creates the possibilities to imagine a life where the ghosts of slavery have been dealt with properly. By dealing with the ghosts of slavery, the prospect of a free state is heightened because the dramatic impact of captivity on the human condition has been addressed. With this background on Venus, the necessity of animating the relationship between the two male captives from the *Marie-Séraphique* becomes more palpable.

Although there are no available images of the *Recovery*, the Slave Voyages database has recreated a 3-D diagram of the *Marie-Séraphique*. Figure 4 comes from the 3-D rendition of the ship which was recreated using a collection at Musée de Nantes in France. In the video of the 3-D rendition, the narrator mentions enslaved people were divided by a 9-foot wall in which men and women were separated on each side. There is also mention of men being shackled in pairs and guarded by guns, the goal being to limit communication and resistance.¹⁵⁷ The images of the *Marie-Seraphique* affirm a view of captive men as more dangerous than captive women and children and, therefore, needing to be shackled, which can be seen in figure 5.

¹⁵⁷ Slave Voyages, *Marie-Séraphique*.

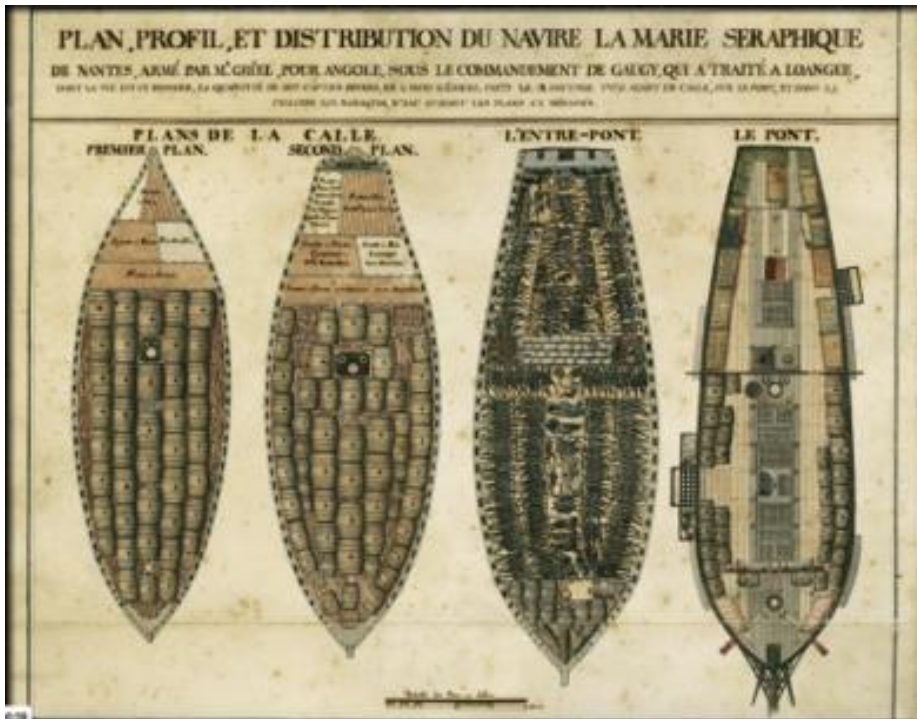


Figure 4. *The Marie-S raphique*, 1770–1774. Mus e de Nantes, France [accessed via Slave Voyages].



Figure 5. *The Marie-S raphique* [zoomed in to show shackles], 1770–1774. Mus e de Nantes, France [accessed via Slave Voyages].

In figure 5, viewers are brought back to the colonial/modern gender system and the budding notions of what constitutes each gender.¹⁵⁸ What remains consistent is the positioning of the black male as aggressive and dangerous and, perhaps, even capable of creating power for themselves; black females and children are seen as passive and perhaps more willing to follow the lead of the male. This view of sex and gender is fickle and relies on captives being void of desire and collectively tied to a black or “African” identity. Smallwood contends captives were not seeking to create a monolithic racial identity. She wrote:

Atlantic commodification meant not only exclusion from that which is recognizable as community, but also immersion in a collective whose most distinguishing feature was its unnatural constitution: it brought strangers together in anomalous intimacy. A product of violence, the slave cargo constituted the antithesis to community.¹⁵⁹

Smallwood raises two important points. The thread of slave cargo being the antithesis to community is potent as it clarifies captives' first thoughts were not to create a monolithic African or Black community/identity. The quote from page 101 reaffirms the arguments put forth by Lugones and also reaffirms my own sentiments about the slave ship creating the conditions for captives to garner power in their own ways by feeling for each other. As Smallwood stated, the slave ship brought

¹⁵⁸ Colonial/modern gender system as discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁵⁹ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 101.

together strangers in an “anomalous intimacy.”¹⁶⁰ If the goal of slave traders was to protect their commodities and the products of those commodities through racialization and gendering/ungendering, how could they account for intimacy as a product of these processes? It can be argued captives were separated by sex to avoid new life being created onboard; however, as Tinsley and Jessica Marie Johnson show in their works, intimacy went beyond sex. In fact, intimacy was women holding other women crying, children telling each other stories to help pass time, or men sharing a pair of cuffs and planning their great escape.

Intellectually, we can surmise the first moments on the ship as a reckoning with linear conclusions of time and travel in the Middle Passage. Smallwood expounded on this in the quote from page 131, linking it with “unparalleled displacement.” She wrote:

For African emigrants, the slave ship was not just a setting of brutality and death, but also a locus of unparalleled displacement. . . . Out of sight of any land, enslaved Africans commenced a march through time and space that stretched their own systems of reckoning to the limits.¹⁶¹

These marches through time and space allow us to understand the basis for intimate and ‘kin’ship relations among the enslaved. Each enslaved person had their own knowledge of deciphering day from night and spring from summer. This exchange of knowledge became a valid path of forming bonds among scattered

¹⁶⁰ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 101.

¹⁶¹ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 131.

people. Although they may not have been forming relationships based on an African or Black identity, I argue they were forming coalitions of resistance and survival on slave ships to protect the idea of one, emphasizing the intersection of race and gender in the establishment of these forces.

This discussion that Smallwood takes up about unparalleled displacement and the creation of relationships based on a “African or Black Identity” is almost flipped on its head in the context of *Chango*. As I will show in the forthcoming section, Chango cursed the people living on Africa’s shores, marking them as the bantu. In weaving this story together, Olivella still manages to tend to the ethnic and racial differences between the people being captured by slave traders. So, although he is not explicitly naming the bantu as “African” or “black,” the story is crafted in a way that acknowledges the collection of ethnic groups being transformed into one and guided by Yoruban Orichas—the bantu. In fact, there is one scene in the book where the narrator mentions “the Ibos, Oyos, and Yagbas, prisoners in Nembe, the village of the dead at the mouth of the Niger River.”¹⁶² Later, on the next page, the narrator states, “We could learn nothing from the Isoko slaves taken onto two ships yesterday. We locked them up separately, but those blacks communicate among

¹⁶² Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 33.

themselves with their gaze. Silence, their eyes are their best tongue, regardless of their tribe of origin.”¹⁶³

Even here, the myriad groups are described as “blacks” and even more, we see hints of Smallwood’s analysis as the narrator acknowledges that they communicate among themselves through their gaze, with their eyes being “their best tongue.” Olivella’s text points to the “anomalous intimacy” between captives as they found ways to build routes of communication, a task that was necessary for them to start overturning the curse that Chango put on them. Further, again, there is an intimacy of knowing constructed through these exchanges of glances. To know what someone is saying through their eyes and through their silence indicates a desire and concerted effort of the individuals involved to learn and comprehend the nonverbal cues that only intimacy can incite.

As it relates to the colonial/modern gender system, the intermingling of racialization and gendering also becomes clearer. As Lugones writes:

Considering critically both biological dimorphism and the position that gender socially constructs biological sex helps us understand the scope, depth, and characteristics of the colonial/modern gender system. The sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that has understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender—both are powerful fictions.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 34.

¹⁶⁴ Lugones, “Heterosexualism,” 202.

If gender and race are mythical creations, then we can consider captives traveling on the Atlantic as being changed into commodities and also made into people that fit the fictional roles created by white people in Europe and across the Americas. We can also think about slave ship quarters as private spaces where control over sex and its resources and products is extended by separating captive men and women by sex. If the “cognitive production of modernity” understands race as gendered and gender as raced, for African captives traveling on the Middle Passage this may explain the disparate ideas white Europeans held about captives and their varying origins.

Smallwood shows how captives’ ethnic identification was ignored and transformed to fit, in the words of Lugones, a fictional racial identity—being “African.” The transatlantic slave trade provided the means for the creation of these racial and gendered fictions to unfold at the same time given the commodification process captives went through, as they were simultaneously stripped of their ethnic identity and ideas about sex and gender. This stripping of ethnicity and ideas about sex and gender sets the conditions for captives to be brought into the colonial/modern gender system.

Although the images of the *Marie-Séraphique* do not write “men,” “women,” “boy,” and “girl” as part of the ship schematic, they clearly show a variation of different kinds of people aboard the ship. We see a figure of a mother that looks like she is nursing a baby. We see variations of male bodies in figure 2—some tall, some

short, some fat, some thin. Eltis¹⁶⁵ used the details of the paintings of the collection along with archival research in an attempt to tell a story about conditions aboard the ship for captives. The purpose of this, I think, echoes the goals of abolitionists to provide a visual chilling enough to command people's attention. We are no longer in a space where calls for abolition of the transatlantic slave trade are necessary; however, I would argue given the systemic attack on subjects such as African American history across the United States, the rendition of ship diagrams is a necessary educational tool. Not only does it make us aware of the conditions aboard ships, but it also provides a visual representation of gender and race making.

This discussion of Smallwood and the Lugones shares similar contexts with one of Manzano's poems, that being "El comerciante de los esclavos" or "The Slave-Trade Merchant." More generally, some of Manzano's poems were created while he was enslaved in Cuba. We see this specified many times throughout his writing, a detail I was keen to because it hones the particulars of slave trading in the country. In the poem, "El comerciante de los esclavos" or "The Slave-Trade Merchant," Manzano goes into great detail about the spectacular violences produced by the slave trade in both Cuba and Africa. In many ways, Manzano was presenting a juxtaposition to how whiteness and blackness were seen at the time. He switches in and out of these two views in the poem, sometimes pointing to the victors of being

¹⁶⁵ David Eltis, "Slave Voyages" (blog), <https://www.slavevoyages.org/blog/author/david-eltis/12/>.

known as a great slave trader and other times reaffirming the terror their work inflicted on captives. I call attention to this because this poem, read alongside the images of the Marie-Seraphique, emphasizes the transatlantic slave trade as a beast of a machine, a system propelled by the commodification and loss of human life. Not only that, Manzano offers us a counter-narrative in the narrative he creates in “El comerciante de los esclavos” by fluctuating between different views of the slave trade merchant.

The specification of Cuba in the poem alongside the imagery of the horrors of the slave trade stood out to me in the poem, mainly because it seems as though Manzano was concerted in his efforts to describe the specificities of being an enslaved person in Cuba. There is no omnipresent “colonial power;” indeed, by specifying the conditions of slavery in Cuba, Manzano is grounding the readers more in the reality of the situation. Although Spain was the prevailing colonial force, the slavery machine could not run without the loyalty and dedication of many royal and colonial subjects across the Americas. The system of slavery itself also varied country by country, the common denominator usually being captives transported via slave ship domestically or internationally. The English translation of his poem states,

How can they dare advocate this trade, / Or call the sacred scriptures to its aid. / How can they have the boldness to lay claim, / and boast their title to the Christian name; / Or yet pretend to walk in reason’s light, / And wage eternal war with human right. / The pen does all the business of the sword, / on Congo’s shore, the Cuban merchant’s word / Serves to send forth a thousand brigands bold, / “To make a prey,” and fill another hold; / To ravage distant nations at his ease, / By written order, just as he may please: / “Set snares and traps to catch” his fellow men.

Perhaps the Cuban merchants too, may think / In guilt's great chain, he's but the farthest link. / Forsooth, he sees not all the ills take place, / Nor goes in person to the human chase; / He does not hunt the negro down himself, / Of course he only furnishes the pelf. / He does not watch the blazing huts beset, / Nor slips the horde at rapine's yell, nor yet / Selects the captives from the wretched band, / Nor spears the aged with his own right hand. The orphan's cries, the wretched mother's groans, / He does not hear; nor sees the human bones / Strewed o'er the desert bleaching in the sun, / Memorials sad, of former murders done.¹⁶⁶

In the two stanzas above, we see Manzano pointing to the complicity of the "Cuban traders" in what they cannot or did not see for themselves on Africa's western shores. Those Cuban traders did not see people having their towns and villages violently ripped from them by competing kingdoms and slave merchants. They did not engage in the "human chase," and, yet and still, they accumulated wealth on the backs of African captives. As the translation of Manzano's poem later goes on to say,

But this most grave and "excellent Senor," / Is cap in hand with the official corps, / Receives the homage due to wealth that's gained, / No matter how, or where it be obtained. His friends are too indulgent to proclaim / What deeds are coupled with his wide-spread fame. / 'Tis true, he merely purchases the prey, / And kills by proxy only in the fray; / His agents simply snare the victims first, / They make the war, and he defrays the cost.¹⁶⁷

Here we see Manzano very clearly outlining how the Cuban trader is not far off in the chain of guilt or complicity. What Manzano is highlighting is how despite Cuba's order in the chain of predator or prey, the country benefited and garnered

¹⁶⁶ Juan Francisco Manzano, Edward J. Mullen, and Richard Robert Madden, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave: Juan Francisco Manzano, 1797–1854* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1981), 46–48.

¹⁶⁷ Manzano, Mullen, and Madden, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, 49.

wealth from the labor of enslaved people. Granted, this wealth was circulating in the hands of multiple entities, including the Spanish crown at some point; however, as I stated earlier, I believe the purpose of Manzano being explicit in his naming of “Cuban traders” is to highlight the intimate knowing that Manzano has of the Cuban slaving system. Even in this sense, Manzano does not falter from pointing to the irony of how the slave trade operated. “His friends” (i.e., other countries involved in the trade) are too indulgent to be honest about what they had to do to gain their “fame.” Again, I am taken by his use of fame here. I cannot help but imagine these traders strutting their stuff around the slave markets, weapons in tow, admired for their bravery in stealing people. Manzano seems to agree as the imagery created is clear—no one is really free from their involvement in the trade: the Cuban traders, the African traders/sellers, the Europeans, and maybe even the Indigenous people who were existing alongside people of African descent in Cuba. The translation of Manzano’s poem continues from above,

Such is the merchant in his trade of blood; / The Indian savage in his fiercest mood
/ Is not more cruel, merciless in strife, / Ruthless in war, and reckless of man’s life!
/ To human suffering, sympathy, and shame, / His heart is closed, and wealth is all
his aim. / Behold, him now in social circles shine, / Polite and courteous, bland --
almost benign, / Calm as the grave, yet affable to all, / His well-taught smile has
nothing to appall; / It plays like sunbeams on a marble tomb, / Or coldly glancing
o’er the death-like gloom, / Creeps o’er his features, as the crisping air, / On Lake
Asphaltes steals, and stagnates there.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Manzano, Mullen, and Madden, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, 49.

This stanza from Manzano is reminiscent of the trial of Jose from chapter 1. As discussed in that chapter, the mobilities of Indigenous and black people were intimately tied during the time. They were tied in a way because both were used as vessels for the betterment of the Spanish crown and their New World colonies. Manzano reaffirms the traits of the Cuban traders as prominent among Indigenous people, too. Ironically enough, he repeats similar sentiments expressed by the Corregidor of Noanama, Juan de Funes y Garcia—that the Indigenous people [of the Corregidor’s command] were “polite and courteous” or as Funes y Garcia put it “rational and competent in Spanish.”¹⁶⁹ Through his simile remarking on the Indigenous person’s “well-taught smile,” Manzano doubles down on description of Indigenous people as “friends” of the merchant. “It plays like sunbeams on a marble tomb, / Or coldly glancing o’er the death-like gloom,” or, in other words, their smile either shined bright on marble tombstones or looked coldly over gloom.

As I mentioned in my examination of the *Marie-Seraphique*, the 3-D video gives more detail to the tight packing that was used by slave traders transporting captives on ships. In his poem, Manzano writes:

Mark how the merchants bow, as he goes by, / How men on ‘Change, at his approach draw nigh, / “Highly Respected,” and esteemed; ‘tis said, / His fame to Afric’s farthest shore is spread!”¹⁷⁰ Later in the poem he writes, “How many wretched beings in each town / Maimed at the onslaught, or in flight cut down! / How many infants from the breast were torn / And frenzied mothers dragged

¹⁶⁹ English translation from Archivo General de la Nación, 934.

¹⁷⁰ Manzano, Mullen, and Madden, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, 43.

away forlorn! / To him, what boots it, how the ship is crammed; / How many hundreds in the hold are jammed! / How small the space! what piteous cries below! / What frightful tumult in the den of woe! / . . . What cares the merchant for that crowded hold, / The voyage pays, if half the slaves are sold!¹⁷¹

These two sets of lines are indicative of Manzano juxtaposing varying images of how the slave trader, and by extension, whiteness is received. On the one hand they are seen as famous and highly respected, on the other they are known as perpetrators of a horrific system of forced migration and labor. What drew my attention to the line “His fame to Afric’s farthest shore is spread!” is the fact that Manzano used “famous” as opposed to “infamous.” This felt purposeful because, again, although we understand the transatlantic system as vile, many people did not share that same view, especially the others who also benefited from what happened on those shores. As such, it actually feels more accurate that famous was used because, in other moments of the poem, Manzano is able to relay a perspective that parts from this and is perhaps more accurate to a different group of people (i.e., many black people, both free and enslaved). “To him, what boots it,” but to Manzano it is obvious that he wonders why they do not care about the discomfort and perils of the slave ship for captives, evidenced by the irony conveyed in the line. Because again, “What cares the merchant for that crowded hold, / The voyage pays,

¹⁷¹ Manzano, Mullen, and Madden, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, 45.

if half the slaves are sold!”¹⁷² As long as the profit was procured, the discomfort of the captives because of crowded space was the least of the trader’s worries.

Thinking about this poem alongside the diagram of the *Marie-Seraphique*, there is a better idea of Manzano’s intimate knowledge of the buying and selling of captives from Africa’s shores to Cuba. Although he was born in Cuba, he seems to carry the memories of the people who arrived on ships before him. He is able to speak to the discomfort of tight-packing on the ships and the complicity of those involved in making that tight-packing possible. Reading the diagram and this poem through the lens of queer intimacies, what is revealed is how Manzano is able to disrupt the “white” version of history as it relates to retelling the story of the transatlantic journey. He displays an intimate knowing of a journey he did not have to embark on. This does not take-away from what he presents in the poem; on the contrary, it emphasizes the degree to which enslaved people shared their collective, yet scattered experiences onboard.

Now that we have met Venus and the two men from the *Marie-Seraphique*, our super-steamer is powered up and ready to cross the threshold into the literary worlds of *Insurrection*, *Chango*, and Manzano’s *Autobiografia* and poems. We will return to the two male captives and Venus at the end once the blueprint has been set for our counter-narrative driven travel.

¹⁷² Manzano, Mullen, and Madden, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, 45.

Between Autobiography and Poetry, the Life of a Former Cuban Slave

Juan Francisco Manzano was a formerly enslaved person of African descent who was born and lived his life in Cuba. Manzano was born sometime in 1797 and is said to have passed away on July 19, 1853. He was born to parents Maria del Pilar Manzano and Toribio Manzano. He is said to have had three siblings, two brothers and a sister. He was under the “care” of Dona Beatriz de Justiz, Marquesa de Santa Ana and wife of Don Juan Manzano. Manzano’s *Autobiografia* is one of the only known autobiographies of an enslaved black person in Latin America and was written during his time while still enslaved. Along with his autobiography, Manzano also wrote a host of poems and a play titled *Zafira* after eventually becoming a free man.

I have discussed the work of Manzano briefly in the previous section on the *Marie-Seraphique*, but I return to it here to highlight some of the ways Manzano conveyed ideas of intimacy in his *Autobiografia* and his poems “Oda a la Religion,” “Un Sueño,” and “A la muerte.” It is clear that Manzano’s pieces are concerted counter-narratives meant to work against the prevailing narrative of the time about slavery in Cuba and the Atlantic World more generally. Before getting into my own analysis of his work, I will first discuss how other scholars have written about it.

In thinking about how scholars have written about the work of Manzano, Matthew Pettway and Robert Ellis come to mind as both take different approaches to interpreting the texts. For Pettway, his book *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black*

Insurrection: Manzano, Plácido, and Afro-Latino Religion discusses the innovative works of Juan Francisco Manzano and Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (Plácido), two black Cuban writers he suggests used Catholicism as a symbolic language for African-inspired spirituality.¹⁷³ In this case, Pettway is focused on how Manzano and Plácido maintained a sense of connection to their African spiritual traditions by combining it with their practice of Catholicism, thus empowering their struggle for liberation.

Ellis takes the approach of doing a queer reading of Manzano's autobiography and some of his poems.¹⁷⁴ In particular, Ellis makes an argument that is threefold and involves "reading through the veil" or reading through what is not explicitly stated in the texts: (a) that Manzano's *Autobiografía* and his poem, "Un Sueño," reveal the homoerotic violence done by white Cuban slavers; (b) that through his autobiography and poems, Manzano, seeks to repair "the circuit of meaning" that was broken by his masters; and (c) that Manzano practiced authorial self-expression by writing his truths in the form of autobiography, especially as a formerly enslaved person.

¹⁷³ Matthew Pettway, *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black Insurrection: Manzano, Plácido, and Afro-Latino Religion* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020).

¹⁷⁴ Robert Richmond Ellis, "Reading Through the Veil of Juan Francisco Manzano: From Homoerotic Violence to the Dream of a Homoracial Bond," *PMLA* 113, no. 3 (1998): 422–3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/463350>.

Although these are only two examples of scholars who have written about the work of Manzano, the thread that carries through both is how each scholar contends with the response to Manzano's work by the powers that be. As Pettway so eloquently states in his Introduction, "The charges levied against Plácido and Manzano were indicative of white anxieties about African-descended writers as the architects of discourse. How could writers with no formal humanistic training, no military expertise to speak of, and no experience in the diplomatic corps pose a political threat to one of the greatest empires in the world?"¹⁷⁵

Pettway's assertions here lend well to Ellis's argument that, through his writings, Manzano sought to create his own circuit of meaning by narrating his life experiences. Both authors are pointing to Manzano's writings as a construction of truth that is the antithesis to the truths constructed by the Spanish government and Cuban authorities alike. I sidestep this analysis to demonstrate how the construction of truth on behalf of Manzano also reveals a layer of intimacy in his writing and life more broadly. We see this in his autobiography and the discussion of his relationship to his mistress who essentially used him as a lapdog. We also see this in his poems "Oda a la Religion," "Un Sueño," and "A la muerte" where he articulates an intimacy in his relationship to God/religion, his second brother, and death. Through his

¹⁷⁵ Pettway, *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black Insurrection*, 6.

autobiography and these select poems, I suggest, in the words of Ellis, that we see through the veil and gain a better understanding of the impact of these intimate relationships on his writing and life more broadly. This queering of Manzano's work is in service to illuminating the counter-narratives that his works boisterously relay as it relates to enslavement in Cuba.

Before getting into the specifics of each poem and the autobiography, it is important to make a note on translation. I read Manzano's work in both Spanish and English. The Spanish text is an interpretation of the works with footnotes that point to other writings of the texts in Spanish. The English texts are not necessarily direct translations, although the sentiments are all the same. Because the English differs ever so slightly from the Spanish, I will choose to focus on the "original" Spanish when available and the English translation when a Spanish version is not available, beginning with the poem "Oda a la Religion."

In this poem, Manzano begins with a beautiful line about how his love for God allows him to rise from the ground, even with tears in his eyes. In the following stanza, Manzano keeps with this imagery, describing a scene of his soul leaving his body to be with his maker. He writes:

[ES] Y en éxtasis profundo / el alma siento de mi cuerpo huyendo / que a su Hacedor rindiendo / veneración y amor, del vano mundo / olvida los fugaces devaneos / y solo a Dios consagra sus deseos.¹⁷⁶

[EN] And in deep ecstasy, I feel my soul fleeing from my body, rendering veneration and love to its maker, forgetting the fleeting fantasies of the vain world and consecrating its desires only to God.

From this verse alone we are able to see how intimate Manzano's relationship is to God. His feelings spiritually are grounded in a bodily experience as he feels his soul leaving his body in service to "veneration" and "love" to its maker (i.e., God), a sentiment so strong that the lived world (or the vain world) does not matter, only the desire to be closer to God. This tone carries throughout the poem as Manzano sometimes questions "por que me dejas do el pecado nace y no hasta ti me llevas?"¹⁷⁷ The admiration and respect that Manzano conveys for God is interesting considering the poem is an ode to religion.¹⁷⁸ I would argue that, although God is associated with Christianity in the context of the poem, it seems as though Manzano was more interested in relaying not only the love and admiration that he has for God but also how intimate that relationship to God is as he remarks on the "divina beldad" and how, because of it, he would sing of love with his

¹⁷⁶ Juan Francisco Manzano and William Luis, *Autobiografía Del Esclavo Poeta y Otros Escritos* (Madrid, Spain: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert, 2007), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6274002>.

¹⁷⁷ ["Oh God! Oh merciful God! Veiled in high, glorious majesty, why do you leave me where sin is born and not take me to you?"]

¹⁷⁸ Remarking here that it does not seem to really be about religion, more about God.

melodious voice rolling through the enchanting sphere. It is clear that God is magical to Manzano, and his majesty arguably grounded Manzano during his time enslaved and thereafter.

I do not think this description of his relationship to God is out of the ordinary, especially considering how enslaved people relied on their faith to carry them through their servitude. What I do find compelling about this poem and the sentiment more generally is, despite Christianity being used as a way to reaffirm the system of slavery, captives still embraced it in their own ways to maintain a closeness to faith and a higher power. This closeness to faith and a higher power was then used as a way to reaffirm communal power and love as we can see in O'Hara's play. Singing, dancing, and praising in a group setting was not only an intimate experience but a divine one that could only be fully understood by the people participating in the processes. This reflects an intimacy of knowing, and, again, these things can only truly be understood by participating in them. I want to take this a step further to suggest that this poem reflects queer intimacies, and Manzano's construction of this poem is grounded in the context of his previous enslavement which included experiences that Ellis argued remained behind a veil. Perhaps Manzano's veneration for God is bolstered by the secrets he could not fully reveal in the context of his autobiography.

These sentiments are expressed in a different way as Manzano addressed death in his poem "A la muerte." He asks death to listen to a Christian who implores

death's favors, speaking to it freely with true voices.¹⁷⁹ We see here the connection between notions of truth as grounded in Manzano's faith as a Christian. He is not afraid to approach death earnestly, to ask that it takes his poor life but not when he is engulfed in love and surrendered to tender passions. The lines of most interest to me in this poem are these:

[ES] Ni cuando transportado / disfrute de los dones / que tributarme sabe / mi adorada consorte: / que en este fiel momento / las plácidas pasiones forman estrecho lazo / variando las razones: / y si cuando me veas / abrazar con fervores los divinos mandatos / del que ha formado al hombre.¹⁸⁰

[EN] Nor when, transported / I enjoy the gifts / that my adored consort / knows how to bestow upon me: / for at this faithful moment / pleasurable passions form a close bond / varying their reasons: / but when you see me / fervently embrace the divine commands / of him who formed man.

These lines are of interest to me because Manzano again points to the closeness that he feels to God. He refers to his "adorada consorte" [adored consort], which I assume is a nod to God and those gifts bestowed upon him potentially being the gift of life (especially because he is speaking to death). The pleasurable passions he refers to underlines the harmony that he feels emotionally and spiritually to the divine, passions that shift for varying reasons. The poem ends kind of abruptly as Manzano notes that he will be seen fervently embracing the divine commands of he who formed man. It seems as though he is reaffirming that he has no fear of death

¹⁷⁹ Manzano and Luis, *Autobiografía Del Esclavo Poeta y Otros Escritos*, 167.

¹⁸⁰ Manzano and Luis, *Autobiografía Del Esclavo Poeta y Otros Escritos*, 167.

because he has an intimate knowing of God and his commands. I guess the argument could be made that he is also revealing an intimate relationship to death as he has a conversation with it grounded in the ways he has perhaps seen death take the lives of others. Again, this signals an intimate knowing not only of religion but faith and, of course, God.

This brings us to another poem by Manzano, "Un Sueno." Ellis makes the argument that Manzano configures homoeroticism as an instrument of oppression (as evidenced by the work of scholars such as Lamonte Aidoo discussed in the Introduction), but, through his poem "Un Sueno," he also sees homoeroticism as "an expression of fraternal love and as a means of establishing a bond of racial reciprocity that would undercut the institutionalized violence of the slave system."¹⁸¹ I find this assertion by Ellis compelling and evident in the poem through the lines that ground his memory of his brother to the land around him. Manzano writes:

[ES] Lo miro, me conoce / me abraza, yo le beso / y ¡oh Dios! entre sus brazos / sentí crecer mi afecto / «Huyamos pues, le dije, / de este recinto horrendo / más terrible a mi vista / que la del horco mismo: / huyamos, caro hermano, / partamos por el viento, / por siempre abandonemos / nuestro enemigo suelo.” / Entonces cariñoso / en los brazos le estrecho, / y cual la vez primera, / las alas rebatiendo, /

¹⁸¹ Robert Richmond Ellis, "Reading Through the Veil of Juan Francisco Manzano: From Homoerotic Violence to the Dream of a Homoracial Bond," *PMLA* 113, no. 3 (1998): 422–3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/463350>.

aire recojo, y formo / las columnas de viento / con que el éter / recorren los pájaros ligeros.¹⁸²

[EN] I look at him, he knows me, he embraces me, I kiss him, and oh God! Between his arms I felt my affection grow. 'Let us flee then,' I said, 'from this horrid place, more terrible to my eyes than the very gallows: let us flee, dear brother, let us depart by the wind, and forever abandon our enemy's land.' Then, lovingly, I hold him in my arms, and just like the first time, wings beating, I gather the air and form the columns of wind with which the light birds traverse the ether.

This fraternal love that Manzano feels for his brother is evident here as he remarks on being able to embrace and kiss his brother again in his dream. The image of him having wings on his back, developed a few lines back, carries over here as he dreams of holding his brother in his arms and carrying them both away from “this horrid place.” This horrid place could be Cuba or the Earth more generally, but the beauty of these lines is how he sees himself and his brother being carried from this place through the wind, the same wind that light birds traverse the ether through.

As Ellis suggests, this reciprocity seeks to cut through the institutionalized violence of the slave system. This is evidenced in the poem as he states that this horrid place was more terrible than the gallows (which we can only assume were the slave gallows), so much more terrible that the love that he feels for his brother was strong enough to carry them both from their enemy’s land. What is interesting about this line, too, is that the enemy's land could be the gallows or again the horrid place. Either way, Manzano is highlighting perhaps a disassociation with the horrid

¹⁸² Manzano and Luis, *Autobiografía Del Esclavo Poeta y Otros Escritos*, 147-48.

place as not quite home. But home could potentially be the place that he and his brother flee to. Similar to the previous poems, here, Manzano is communicating an intimate knowing of life, belonging, death, and faith. We might understand these lines as a metaphor for fleeing oppression, a knowing that they intimately share as he lost his brother during his enslavement. Manzano is communicating feelings of wanting to transcend life as he knows it and this, too, is arguably only made possible by a strong sense of faith in the divine to lead him and his brother to where they want to be. This same sentiment rings true in the case of *Chango* and *Insurrection* and both books highlight themes of faith being linked to freedom. These sentiments reflect an intimate knowing of God and trust in the divine as I have already stated. For now, let us move our super-steamer to the world of *Chango*.

Chango, Orichas, and the Muntu en el Nuevo Mundo

Chango, el gran putas is Manuel Zapata Olivella's 1983 mythic that reimagines transatlantic slavery as a curse put onto people of African descent by the Yoruba deity Chango. This curse, tangentially based on the origin story of Chango, sees the Muntu damned for rebelling against Chango, which led to his imprisonment and exile. According to some sources (including Olivella's book), Chango was the fourth king of Oyo. He is known as the god of lightning, thunder, and war, which could be attributed to him having a "voice like thunder and a mouth that spewed

fire when he spoke.”¹⁸³ During his role as king, he was allegedly challenged by a subordinate which caused some of his followers to desert him as they were impressed by the subordinate’s use of magic. This led to Chango leaving Oyo and committing suicide, which some believers allege was purposeful as it allowed him to ascend to the status of an oricha.¹⁸⁴

This story rings true in Olivella’s novel, except, instead of a cult following arising for Chango and the subsequent instilling of kings in Oyo that believed in him, Olivella crafts a story that sees his followers instead being hunted and captured by the “White Wolf” on the shores of Africa.¹⁸⁵ This eventually led to them being taken on ships to el Nuevo Mundo. Thus, *Chango* maps the path that the Muntu took in an effort to reverse the curse that Chango put on them. They were led by a character named Nago, who from the beginning was being primed by other Orichas (e.g., Ezili and Elegba) to lead the Muntu out of enslavement and back to Africa. More

¹⁸³ Britannica, “Shango | Yoruba God of Thunder, Lightning & Justice,” accessed May 7, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shango>.

¹⁸⁴ Britannica, “Shango.”

¹⁸⁵ Britannica, “Shango.” According to his origin story, once Chango passed on to become an oricha, his followers made a concerted effort to secure a place for their beliefs in the political system of Oyo. This led to Oyo becoming the center of an empire that conquered many other Yoruba kingdoms and the Edo and the Fon, both of which incorporated Chango worship into their religions and continued his cult even after they were not under Oyo’s control.

generally, Olivella's text explores themes of spirituality, freedom, and the role of ancestors in maintaining and achieving both.

For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on how Olivella uses Chango to illuminate the relationship between religion and slavery by using historical facts and magical realism. As seen with Manzano's work and *Insurrection*, we are given another example of how fiction, or rather mythology in this context, becomes a means of representing "truth." Not only that, we also get a better sense of the intimacy of knowing that came as a result of captives being thrust into the folds of the transatlantic system. This intimacy of knowing comes from the perspective of the captives but also, ironically, the White Wolves and the reader. This is evidenced by how the voice of the narrator, or the voice of the text more generally, fluctuates. Oftentimes, Olivella writes as if he is talking to the reader, although, I think the "you" that comes through is speaking to Nago as the warrior chosen to free the Muntu. Other times, the perspective reads in the third person, as if the reader is just reading the story. It is just interesting to consider how jarring the shift in perspective is from moving the reader back and forth between being quite literally in the text and outside of it. I think this is because Olivella is attempting to disrupt what the characters and readers think they know about the story of the Muntu, the lives of the Orichas, and el Nuevo Mundo.

What is interesting is that Olivella does not attempt to present the Orichas as just good or just bad. As it relates to Chango, in the beginning it does not seem as

though he is meant to be justified in what he did to the Muntu. In the poem, “Ngafua, Dreaming, Overhears Chango’s Curse,” it is clear the Muntu understand what happened to them as a result of Chango’s own anger. We can think about the moments before the Muntu are taken on to slave ships by the White Wolf.¹⁸⁶ In one poem, “Ngafua, Dreaming, Overhears Chango’s Curse,” Olivella writes:

Amidst thunder and lightning, / Words of fire, / I heard his horrible curse: / “The descendants of Obafulom, / The children of Iyaa, / Those who raised their fists against me, / The mutinous, / The haughty, / Who from Ile-Ife, / Abode of the gods, / expelled me, / Uprooted will be / And to other worlds banished. / Insatiable peddlers, / Traffickers in life, / Salesman of death, / White wolves, / Merchants of mankind, / Rapists of women, / Your face, / Your people, / Your gods, / Your tongue / They will destroy!”¹⁸⁷

In this poem, we can clearly hear the vengeance in Chango’s curse as he remarks on the people who “raised their voice against” him, and expelled him. He was so angry that he wished for the “white wolves” “merchants of mankind” and “rapists of women” to destroy their faces, their people, their gods, and even their tongues. Olivella’s poem continues with,

The tribes dispersed, / Broken your family, / Separated mothers from your children, / Hated, / Accursed your Orichas, / Even their names / They will forget! / In ships of death / Slaves without shadows, / Zombies, / Estranged from themselves, / confused with the ass, / Manure, / Hungry, / Submissive, / Hanging, / Unredeemed, / Hunted / Along dusty highways, / On islands and coasts, / Rivers,

¹⁸⁶ In the text, Olivella names the European slave traders as the White Wolf. This feels purposeful in the sense that he is clearly naming the perpetrators as white but also wolves, indicating their carnivorous, territorial, and perhaps even dangerous or violent. This rhetorical move is fitting and even more interesting, because there are not many times when he specifies what nation the White Wolf represents. It only comes up tangentially if someone mentions the Portuguese or the Dutch and their endeavors in the Caribbean.

¹⁸⁷ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 21–22.

jungles, mountains and seas, / No mud to measure their footprint, / Nor roof to shelter their sleep, / From other races separated, / Outlawed in America, / The land of martyrdom.”¹⁸⁸

Again, the vengeance is clear. The curse makes sure to disperse tribes, break their families, and separate mothers from their children. Not only this, he remarks on enslaved people not having shadows, becoming zombies estranged from themselves, separated from other races and outlawed in America. I call attention to these parts of the poem because there is an interesting tension there. We can think about this in relation to discussion of the slave ship and Middle Passage, specifically Chango's curse in a mythical sense and the lived realities of enslaved people who traveled on those ships. In this sense, we see a different approach taken with the creation of the counter-narrative, as it becomes difficult to reconcile the determined effort of the curse to punish people in a very inhumane way. This is not a critique of Olivella but more a way of bringing attention to how even in counter-narratives the horrors of slavery still mark captives as perhaps caught up in a predetermined cycle.

In the same poem, however, Olivella presents a contrasting image to the one above. He writes:

“Eia, son of the Muntu! / Freedom, / Freedom / Is your fate. / You will cut the fists, / The tongue, / The arms of the master who denies you. / Mighty / Lion’s paw, / Broad elephant’s leg, / You will free your son’s Indian mother, / The grandmother raped by the master, / Scorned by night, / Enchained by day / In the rut / Of the kitchen.

¹⁸⁸ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 21–22.

The black Indian zambo, / The mulatto, / Nurtured with your blood, / You will free
from prisons, / From dungeons / And from oppressive castes. / With no
boundaries in your blood, / Seed of new humankind, / Avenger of your parents, /
Avenger of your children, / Freedom is your fate!¹⁸⁹

Rebellions, / Flight, / Butchery in the shadows, / Explosion of fury, / Freedom, /
High moon / Will you reach with your fists, / Your dead, / Your fires / And your
fingernails. / The rebellious slaves, / Runaway slaves, / Sons of avenging Orichas. /
In America born, / Will wash the horrible, / The blind / Curse of Chango!"¹⁹⁰

Here, we see Olivella affirming that, although the Muntu have been cursed
by Chango, their fate is still freedom. Not only is their fate freedom, but they use
violence as a means to overcome it because they will avenge their parents and their
children as the "seed of new humankind."¹⁹¹ The intimacy of knowing as it relates to
faith is palpable, freedom as fate is reaffirmed, and the Muntu as the sons of
avenging Orichas is named. In other words, the Muntus' freedom is intricately tied
to their faith in the Orichas.

This tension runs through the text as in another moment in the text we see
Olivella create a scene where one of the Orichas, Ezili, is almost raped by one of the
White Wolves. This harkens back to Manzano also as we see Olivella attempting to
lift the veil on the sexual violence enslaved people endured in what could be
understood as silence. On page 49, Olivella writes, "The women are separated from

¹⁸⁹ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 23.

¹⁹⁰ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 23–4.

¹⁹¹ Very Fanonesque, in the sense that he makes the argument that for the colonized to be
free from colonization they have to use the modes of the colonizer, including violence.

us men because from now on the red-haired wolf is imagining his sultry evenings.”¹⁹² This foreshadows what happens in the next few pages as Ezili is aboard the ship talking to Captain Munis and his crew about how they will exchange gold for captives. In this scene and the ones before it, we see Ezili being characterized as somewhat of a “friend,” perhaps not necessarily friends but “friendly” as she engages in the trading of captives with them. She is seen as being persuaded by gaudiness and richness. To an extent, she also shares some concern with what happens to the captives, but we are also reminded that she seems to be in it for the maintenance of her own wealth and kingdom.

Later, on pages 50–51, the tone of Ezili’s meeting with the White Wolves shifts. Her Touareg servant attempts to warn her that it seems as though they are more armed than usual. Taking advantage of her focus on the gold rings and bracelets in front of her, the crew, along with the Berbers, leverage an attack against Ezili and the Malinkes. The scene moves fast as someone a part of the crew shouts, “I’ll hang from the main mast anyone who deflowers a virgin slave!”¹⁹³ In the same breath, two slave traders begin to undress Ezili, someone shouting, “Divest her of her last thread, lest she hide a dagger. I will not die like the Muslim, with my belly

¹⁹² Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 47.

¹⁹³ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 51.

cut open.”¹⁹⁴ As Ezili is undressed, and orders are shouted to not rape the virgin slaves, Rivaldo, the boatswain, surprised and resentful, answers, “This is a matter of war booty, and I demand my share,” to which someone responds, “Don’t forget we are subject to inspection. I can accuse you before the governor of insubordination.”¹⁹⁵ The way this scene unfolds is provocative, especially because there are orders for virgin enslaved women not to be raped while, at the same time, one woman, an Oricha, is being prepared for it. There is even disagreement among the crew as the boatswain remarks he expects to be able to get in on the action, too.

Lying naked and afraid, Ezili awaits the drunken captain’s advances. Olivella writes, “Once in bed, while he sucks on her navel with his snout, he did not even notice the pricking of the poisoned earring.”¹⁹⁶ The imagery of the slave traders as wolves is apparent here as the captain’s mouth is described as a snout. His assumption that Ezili was completely vulnerable is also apparent as he did not notice that she had an earring capable of piercing and poisoning him. When she realized he was no longer breathing and that only his body was across her, she went on to puncture her own tongue with the other earring, thereby killing herself. Olivella

¹⁹⁴ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 51.

¹⁹⁵ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 51.

¹⁹⁶ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 52.

ends the section with “Blind Wolves, you attempt to twist the fate that Urunla has cast for mortals!”¹⁹⁷

This scene and ending line are compelling for many reasons, but the main reason was that Olivella casts doubts on the characters of Ezili and the slave trading crew. It is almost as if Ezili ends up in a compromising position because she was more concerned with the bounty the crew was planning to give her in exchange for captives. In the same vein, the crew and the captain think they are thinking smarter than Ezili by distracting her with the gold; however, little did they know she was already prepared to kill and be killed. The “blind wolves” attempted to change the fate for the captain and Ezili, not realizing their interactions were being guided by the Orichas, as Urunla possessed the boards that had the human destiny written on it.

Arguably, this scene represents an intimate knowing on behalf of Ezili, as, again, she was prepared with poisoned earrings. Perhaps she knew of her destiny and also it was hinted that she had been taken advantage of before by Muslim men. In thinking about this moment being a part of the destiny for the characters, I would again be remiss if I did not comment on how these very violent scenes, although fiction, represent the truths of many African women, both enslaved and not.

¹⁹⁷ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 52. Urunla, or Orunla, is the Oricha who possessed Ifa’s boards, upon which human destiny is written (460).

On the flip side of these scenes that depict more violent situations, we doubly see Olivella use symbolism to craft a beautiful tale about the relationship between the Orichas, the Muntu, the land, and the cosmos. In particular, Mother Earth is feminized and recognized as a powerful being granting life to the world. This world includes the White Wolves who perpetuate horrendous crimes against captives. In one of the first poems of the text, "Shadows of my Elders," Olivella writes:

Let us here the voice of the wise ones, / The will of the Orichas riding / On their horses' backs / Today we bury my son, / The sacred seed, / In the navel of mother Africa / So it can die / Rot in her womb, / And be reborn in the blood of America. / Mother Earth, offer to the new Muntu / Your scattered islands, / The welcoming hips of your coasts. / Offer him the tall mountains, / The plateaus, / Your hard spinal cord. / And to nourish him with your sap, / The newborn son in your valleys, / The broad rivers regale him spilled blood / That pours into your seas.¹⁹⁸

Here we see Olivella describing the birthing process of the Muntu, essentially. It is beautiful in the sense that Olivella personifies Mother Earth as the mother who gives birth through the land. This is evidenced by his description of the sacred seed being planted in the navel of mother Africa (that sacred seed eventually becoming the American Muntu that was reborn in the blood of America). He also harps on what Mother Earth can offer the Muntu in their ascension, that being the hips of her coasts (once again pointing to the life-giving aspects of the Earth as the

¹⁹⁸ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 6.

hips usually help bare the weight of a baby) and her hard spinal cord (potentially providing them strength as it did her when she gave birth).

In “Invocation to the Great Orichas,” we see similar imagery as Olivella invokes the Orichas, bringing them to life in the narrative. This poem is an example of how Olivella fluctuates between perspectives of the narrator as it is not completely clear who is calling on the Orichas. What we know is that they are being invoked, and, after this poem, we learn of Chango’s imprisonment and banishment that led to the curse of the Muntu.

I name you, Chango, / Father of storms / With your bull’s phallus, / Colossal lightning bolt. / Oba, Oshun and Oha, / Your sister concubines, / Goddesses of the rivers / You impregnate in a single nuptial night. . . .

Protector of fertilized wounds, / Childbirth vigilante, / Blood of the placenta, / Incipient waters you guide. / Children all, / Children of Yemaya! / Butch-dyke Olokun! / Husband and lover of Olosa, / Your sister and wife. / In the sea’s abyss / You skew the sexes, / Placing beards on women; / Hanging breasts on men.¹⁹⁹

These two sets of stanzas are of interest because we see a collision between queer intimacies and the intimacy of knowing. Chango is doubly the father of storms and the guide of waters and able to impregnate his “sister concubines” in a single nuptial night. This is not necessarily “queer” in the sexuality sense (i.e., same-sex encounters); however, it is queer in the sense that it presents an image of nonnormative (or rather non-Western) ideals about gender and sexuality.²⁰⁰ Yemaya

¹⁹⁹ Olivella and Luis, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, 10–11.

²⁰⁰ Although it is interesting because he explicitly calls one of the Orichas “butch-dyke.”

is the goddess of the sea, so it is also interesting to consider how ideas of water and the sea interweave here with sentiments about biological sex. As Olivella writes, there are beards placed on women and breasts placed on men. This is a bit ironic also as we know that there are some women with beards and men with breasts, not because of any explicit changing of their body but because of the nature of humanity.

This discussion of the sea and its influence on the fluidity of gender is reminiscent of Tinsley's article as mentioned in the section on the *Marie-Seraphique* and the *Recovery*. Not only does Tinsley offer a concept to understand the different dimensions of "shipmate," she also responds to what she identifies as a gap in Paul Gilroy's groundbreaking work from 1993, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*.²⁰¹ In her text, Tinsley identifies the black queer Atlantic as a site of "cross-currents," a term that she borrows from Kale Fajardo.²⁰² Tinsley defines cross-currents as theoretical and ethnographic borderlands at sea. In these borderlands, the gendered, sexualized, classed, and racialized self transforms. The queer black Atlantic, she posits, navigates cross-currents, bringing together brutality and desire, genocide and resistance. These sentiments are ever-present in Olivella's text as the

²⁰¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²⁰² Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic."

Orichas are being evoked in a way that subverts whatever meanings of sex/gender one might have.

More generally, *Chango* illuminates on the intimacy of knowing fomented by captives in conjunction with spiritual figures on the African continent, in the Middle Passage, and en el Nuevo Mundo. This intimacy of knowing was imperative for captives as the knowledge of the Orichas guided their path in freeing the Muntu. By extension, this intimacy of knowing was made possible by queer intimacies, or leaning into nonnormative ways of relating and knowing, to capitalize on the physical and spiritual skills granted to them by the gods. As discussed in the case of Manzano and the forthcoming section on *Insurrection*, these intimacies are doubly made possible by captives' relationship with faith, God, and spirituality more generally.

Re-Imagining Nat Turner's Slave Insurrection: A Que(e)rying of History

The super-powered-super-steamer has arrived in a time described as “now and then” and a place described as “here and there.”²⁰³ In between the now and then and here and there we meet two main characters and six others who are just as important to the story that unfolds. As historical events and their subsequent studies continue to reveal, time is deeply misunderstood and often used to mark

²⁰³ Robert O'Hara, *Insurrection: Holding History*, (London, UK: Theatre Communications Group, 1998).

idealized forms of progress. If we think about archives as sites of exploration, one is able to confront the realities of time by sitting with and in the history that is being held. Robert O'Hara depicts this sentiment in his play, *Insurrection: Holding History* (1999). His author's note states "this play should be done as if it were a Bullet through Time."²⁰⁴ That is because one of the play's main protagonists, Ron, goes back and forth between the present day and the planning stages of Nat Turner's slave rebellion. He is guided through these shifts in time mostly by his 189-year-old great-great-grandpa T.J., who is often spoken for by the root who is Mutha Wit.

Other characters in the play include the following: Gertha/Clerk Wife/Mistress Mo'tel, Octavia/Katie Lynn, Nat Turner/Ova Seea Jones, Clerk Son/Izzie Mae, Reporter/Cop/Clerk Husband/Buck Naked/Detective, Hammet, and random field slaves. As evidenced by how the characters are named, many of the characters are played by one person. This is important to the construction of the play, too, as sometimes the characters slip through time with the characters of the "present" or "future" finding themselves in the "past" and the characters of the "past" finding themselves in the "present" or "future." For example, Gertha, Ron and Octavia's mom, is at one point speaking as Gertha their mom but when Ron and T.J. are on the plantation, she begins to speak as and through Mistress Mo'tel, the mistress of the plantation. This is interesting because Mistress Mo'tel is a white

²⁰⁴ Robert O'Hara, *Insurrection*.

woman. This move follows O'Hara's goal of disrupting how we understand perspective and the linearity of time.

This is a key aspect of the play and is pertinent to the explorations at hand as O'Hara constructs a play that is meant to disrupt how time is understood and also formative historical events. This is exasperated by his choice to make Ron a gay PhD student who is outspoken and sometimes arrogant. These aspects of Ron's character are balanced out with T.J., who has not spoken in years but still listens to the research that Ron does. It is not until they go back in time when T.J. does eventually speak for himself, and, through that, he chastises Ron for projecting his knowledge and experience on the past. These creative moves made by O'Hara are described by Fadera Chatard Carpenter as a que(e)rying of history. Carpenter's analysis highlights how O'Hara's play becomes an avenue for interpreting different historical truths.

Carpenter's central argument in her article, "Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection*: 'Que(e)Rying History,'" is that Robert O'Hara's play, *Insurrection*, "uses the fantastical" to provide a different perspective of African-American history, one that is not tethered to normative notions of white sexuality.²⁰⁵ When Ron arrives at the plantation, he discovers new meanings of not only insurrections and revolts, but also social identity construction as it relates to race and sexuality. Thus, que(e)ring becomes a tool of O'Hara to better tell this story as he disrupts linear notions of

²⁰⁵ Carpenter, "Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection*."

time while simultaneously challenging what has been seen as absolute or objective truths. Here, Carpenter argues, is where the performativity of history reveals itself in O'Hara's work. Through his play, Carpenter suggests that O'Hara "queers" "the authoritative notion of history by emphasizing the performative role history plays in shaping our social identities and consciousness."²⁰⁶

With this in mind, the foundation is set to understand some of the core tenants of the play. There is one "argument" that threads through the play, or rather the goal of the enslaved black people to rise up and kill "all the whites" in the city of South Hampton. To me, it reads as them not only seeking freedom for themselves but also retribution. We can see this in the conversation between Nat Turner (Nat) and Hammet, who is another enslaved person on the plantation in South Hampton. Although the other enslaved folks were laughing and joking about the plan to revolt coming to fruition, Nat reaffirms to Hammet that people are finding out about their mission and offering to help. Hammet is surprised to find out that it is people from up north. In one scene of the play on page 38, Nat pulls out a newspaper to show Hammet in which he states the white people have "been warned . . . they been warned by they own peoples."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Carpenter, "Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection*," 186.

²⁰⁷ O'Hara, *Insurrection*, 38.

This scene from the play, however, is contrasted not only by the laughter of the other enslaved folks but also their fear. As Izzie Mae and Katie Lynn remark, they want to be free, but they do not want a “half-ass hot-collared nigga-crazy plans ‘bout a bunch of axe-carryin’ fools creepin’ through the streets.”²⁰⁸ And I have to say, I understand where this fear comes from. As historical accounts and even the play have shown, even just thinking about revolting could lead to the torture or even death of enslaved black people. So their hesitation to trusting Nat is warranted; although, for Nat, he believes he is being guided by a higher power, that power being God. And because of that, the enslaved people should trust in his and God’s plan, even though it did not come to fruition before.

This points to another central theme of the play, that being the connection between belief/faith/God and the lived realities of slavery. When Ron is finally able to ask T.J. a question he can answer himself, the first thing he asks him is if he believes in God. It is not only interactions between T.J. and Ron where this question about faith in God comes up. In one scene, Nat remarks, ““MY GAWD -- /” to which Izzie Mae responds, “Yo’ GAWD let these white men snatch us up from offa that Coast and bring us ova heah.”²⁰⁹ Here again we see the tension between enslavement and faith. While Nat is calling on his god, the enslaved people he is

²⁰⁸ O’Hara, *Insurrection*, 40.

²⁰⁹ O’Hara, *Insurrection*, 77.

expecting to rally behind him are resistant because why would God allow white men to enslave them? These moments in particular harken back to the discussion of religion in chapters 1 and 2. The conversation differs slightly in this instance as we see the particulars of enslaved black people in the United States relying on singing, dancing, and hymns not only to get them through the workday but also to guide them to their freedom. This scene in the play underscores the apprehension that some of the enslaved people felt about following Nat.

There are many times throughout the play when the reframe of the last becoming the first is repeated. Once the enslaved people make it to the meeting with Nat, this reframe comes up again in Nat's sermon. Toward the end of it, he remarked:

“THOSE OF YOU THAT MURMURIN’ / ‘GAINST ME / YOU OUGHTA KNOW THAT IT’S / TIME / TIME / FO’ THE FIRST / TO BECOME THE LAST / AND THE LAST / TO BECOME THE” at this moment Hammet interjects to finish his sentence with “WHITE MAN!”²¹⁰

Although Hammet is screaming white man to indicate that a white man was approaching, the double meaning is compelling and rings true a bit here in the sense that the last becoming the first is a call for the last to garner the same, if not more, power over the first. Even more, it indicates a desire, perhaps, to become the first, which in this instance is the white man. The purpose of this is manifold, mainly that

²¹⁰ O’Hara, *Insurrection*, 74.

in the context of a revolt, becoming the white man could mean garnering power and also inflicting violence on the other.

This takes us to another central theme of O'Hara's play, which is how race is understood/conveyed during that time shown through the enslaved characters, the omnipresent "white boogeyman" and also the white indentured servant Buck Naked. In particular, in a scene on pages 76–77, Buck Naked compares his experience as indentured as on the same level as the black enslaved folks. It is ironic and funny because, when he goes to make this comparison, Izzie Mae throws back in his face that, although he sees them as sharing the same struggle, when the black people start killing the white people, they are going to turn and kill Buck Naked, too. She even starts off her line with "MASSA NAKED!" emphasizing how him being white is equated with him being capable of being appointed as a slave master.

We see glimpses of this in the play, too, as in a previous scene Buck Naked is tasked with helping Ova Seea Jones tie up the enslaved people to whipping posts when they did not get the necessary weight of cotton on a given day. Even this proximity, or rather distance, from the physical abuse marks Buck Naked as not in the same position as an enslaved person. We know this as there are defined differences between indentured servitude and enslavement; however, O'Hara's construction of Buck Naked highlights the shared daily struggles that someone like him and Izzie Mae shared by living on a plantation. His participation or even presence in the planning of the insurrection is an example of the potential outcomes

of a race war—he may have proximity to blackness, but he is not black. And at the end of the day, if the goal is to kill white people, then Buck Naked would be a part of those targets, too.²¹¹

As I have stated, the main tension in the text is how the past, present, and future are experienced by Ron. He only ends up travelling in time because he starts asking his grandpa about his life as an enslaved person and subsequently the Nat Turner rebellion. Many times throughout the play we see Ron trying to “wake up” the enslaved population or even stand up for them from abuses such as being whipped. Each time he interjects he is reminded that he does not know all that he thinks he knows. This comes to a head when he tells the enslaved people that he can teach them how to read and that he even read about the insurrection and can confirm that they all die.

What is interesting about these moments is that, before them, T.J. reminds Ron to just be quiet and witness. Instead, Ron inserts himself into moments he was not originally a part of. As it relates to time travel, it is evident that Ron does not quite contend with the potential consequences of his actions. Imagine what world Ron would return to if he was able to convince Nat Turner to change his plan? His attempts at changing the course of history are reminiscent of what Bianca Premo

²¹¹ I would call this an exaggeration because, although understandable given the context of the time, white “allies” would probably not be the targets of the insurrectionists.

discusses in her chapter, “As if She Were My Own,” in particular her notion that, as surveyors of history, we should avoid projecting our modern understandings and emotions of events of the past.²¹² As T.J. remarks to Ron, “i LIVED it!! / you the one Watchin’! / i brought you heah ta learn. ta listen. not change nuthin we change in our OWN time. / not. in. othas.”²¹³

This moment harkens to an argument put forth by Carpenter in her essay, that being how the fantastical is re-realized—T.J.’s assertion that Ron will suffer from his lack of first-hand knowledge is fantastical because we do not have access to enslaved people’s voices in “real time;” however, Ron has a 189-year old great-great-grandpa who can tell him some of these narratives. The tension being exasperated here is the boundary between what is written versus what is spoken and the validity of one or the other. *Insurrection: Holding History*, Carpenter argues, asks that Ron, the protagonist, and the audience recognize the importance of preserving oral history as a methodology. As she so eloquently states, “O’Hara’s play seems to suggest that, in the spirit of queered inclusivity, all factors and methods of historic documentation should share space - and status - within our cultural records.”²¹⁴ She describes this as a quality of openness, one that sees the material

²¹² Premo, “As If She Were My Own.”

²¹³ O’Hara, *Insurrection*, 86.

²¹⁴ Carpenter, “Robert O’Hara’s *Insurrection*,” 191.

body as containing cultural memories thereby becoming a “uniquely powerful form of historic documentation.”²¹⁵

In an attempt to wrap up our trip in the world of *Insurrection*, I want to delve more into the relationship between Ron and T.J. and, by extension, the relationship between Ron and Hammet. Throughout the play, T.J. asks Ron a few times about his sexuality. As it relates to Ron and Hammet, their encounters with each other are brief but can be understood as O’Hara’s attempt to imagine queer subjectivity during the times of slavery. Although Ron and Hammet exchange glances throughout the play, there are two scenes that are particularly intimate between the two. The first occurred when Ron and T.J. first arrive at the plantation and Hammet blows into his mouth, an action that can be seen as both sweet and sexual.

Carpenter examines how this moment between Ron and Hammet opens up the possibilities of different kinds of love, intimacy, and ways of relating for black men. This is evidenced by the relationship between Ron and Hammet and Ron and T.J. Thus, as Carpenter argues, O’Hara’s play having a ‘gay presence’ illustrates how inclusive the possibilities of our past and present can be and the acceptance of them leading to more wholeness in black communities—a wholeness that recognizes our differences as a part of our pastpresentfutures. On the whole, Carpenter shows how

²¹⁵ Carpenter, “Robert O’Hara’s *Insurrection*,” 191.

O'Hara queers a single authoritative voice in history while simultaneously creating space for a queer history to emerge. This is que(e)rying in action.

In fact, Carpenter makes the argument that queering happens in O'Hara's play in three distinct ways: (a) through the script's form and language, (b) the spectacular plot, and (c) through the physical presence of a gay character and queer aesthetic.²¹⁶ Through the script's form and language, O'Hara challenges linearity that is used to construct historical narratives. The spectacular plot of the show underscores the multiplicity of historical perspective and also emphasizes there is no singular authoritative truth. The addition of a gay character and queer aesthetic creates the space for alternative notions of sexuality (or sexual orientation), race, and gender in our historical imaginaries.

These three arguments in tandem reinforce Carpenter's central argument that O'Hara challenges normative notions of history through performance. When she refers to historical imaginaries or "imagined histories," she is not necessarily overlooking the authenticity of past experiences; instead, she is attempting to point to the validity of exploring other historical perspectives, those that are not white, masculine, and heterosexual.

This idea of "imagined histories" rings true for *Insurrection*, *Chango*, and to an extent, Manzano's work as well. This concept captures the necessity of

²¹⁶ Carpenter, "Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection*," 188.

considering other forms or methods for relaying histories of slavery, especially those that deal with intimate experiences among captives. Our super-steamer is now fully powered by these histories, grounded in a sense of love that only wants to see these counterhistories survive. We will take one last cruise on *el Cercano*, alongside the *Marie-Seraphique* and the *Recovery*. This last cruise will lead offboard and onward to considering other potential paths for understanding queer intimacies and the intimacy of knowing in histories of Transatlantic slavery.

One Last Cruise, Offboard and Onward: Conclusion

Our analysis of Manzano, *Chango*, and *Insurrection* brings us back to the two men from the *Marie-Seraphique* and the two girls named Venus in Hartman's essay. These four captives, along with the main characters from the literary texts, are reimagined in this chapter with the goal of providing a different perspective on slavery's archive and intimacy in the lives of enslaved people. It is in service to forefronting captives and the potential bonds they created with each other in life and in death. Their presence in this chapter acknowledges the slave ship and New World as spaces where fictions of race and gender were subverted in service to closeness, creating an enigma to power.

The unfamiliar bred new forms of familiarity for captives as they turned to each other. Manzano held his brother in his arms as they sought to flee this horrid place. *Chango* banished the Muntu in hopes that they would find their way back home. And Ron and T.J. embarked on a time-traveling mission to remind the

audience that enslaved people had a destination in mind that was not the plantation or Africa.²¹⁷ The two male captives from the *Marie-S raphique* docked with the possibility to run, and Venus took their last breaths aboard the *Recovery*. All of these people potentially made the radical decision to trust each other, to trust each other with their fates. Queer intimacies allows for a read of this kind of closeness as a provocation to the captives' entry into the colonial/modern gender system as they attempted to center their own desires despite the conditions of the ship and their subsequent commodification.

Although the literary texts present “endings” of their own, perhaps those that feel more neatly wrapped with a bow, I want to emphasize the importance of reading these texts alongside historical documents, especially those that read as incomplete. Although the information known about the two male captives from the *Marie-Seraphique* is limited and perhaps tethered to the time they lived in, it is doubly important the specters of their existence are given the space to roam—across the Atlantic, in archives, and in the deepest crevices of one’s heart and mind. If there is a curiosity about how to create space for the specter's existence, I implore the reader to look to theoretical frameworks that open up different worlds of possibility (i.e., queer theory).

²¹⁷ A reminder that this place for the enslaved people in *Insurrection* was Jerusalem.

Conclusion, or, Rather, Until Next Time on *El Cercano*

Our super-powered-super-steamer travel has sadly come to an end. I would like to think of this end as just the beginning of more ocean travel to come, through other historical and literary documents alike, illuminating on the necessity of understanding intimacy in the lives of enslaved black people. This dissertation has been an endeavor in leaning into the threshold locations that methods such as critical fabulation, creative writing, and archival research bring to light. It is an invitation to others to step into the results that such methods create—a world where Jose is not sentenced to eight years in a presidio for something he potentially did not do; a world where Antonio does not die waiting for his innocence to be proven; a world where we can remember the two captives from the *Marie-Séraphique* as executing on their most intimate desires to run away together, an action that was in direct opposition to their commodification. Across three case studies, this dissertation has argued that colonial archives pathologized black desire through legal neologism (chapter 1), sacramental suspicion (chapter 2), and visual erasure (chapter 3). Reading with and against those archives, I have shown that queer intimacies nonetheless surfaced—fragile, improvisational, and often invisible to power.

The previous chapter offered an exploration of a slave ship diagram and a voyage that included two captives who were recorded as running away. These captives and analysis of the diagram were then read alongside Venus from

Hartman's "Two Acts." This exercise was important as it grounded us in the incomplete stories of four souls who cannot be fully known by the historical record. These lack of traces of their lives was "okay," though, as I relied on literary texts to fill in the gaps about what can possibly be known not about the captives but about enslaved black people more generally who had an intimate knowing of the same experiences as the two captives from the *Marie-Seraphique* and *Venus and Venus*. O'Hara, Olivella, and Manzano's works offered counter-narratives that explored the connections between race and spirituality/religion, connections that I name as queer intimacies and, by extension, an intimacy of knowing. Their works also offered different perspectives to the ones established via the criminal case records explored in chapters 1 and 2 and aided in the construction of the counter-narratives developed in each.

Whether in the 1600s or the 1800s, the criminal case records emphasized how the pathways to intimacy for enslaved black people was limited by legal and religious doctrine of the time. The case against Jose highlights how intimacy can be understood through the lens of violence or nonconsensual forms of relating to the other. Although we can only assume that the witness testimonies were fabricated or hyperbolic, we are able to see how enslaved black people were guilty until proven innocent. The contours of this case were especially interesting as the main witnesses were Indigenous people who communicated a concerted effort to "catch" Jose for his alleged crimes. As such, I crafted a counter-narrative that reimagined Jose's

relationship to the Indigenous people he encountered as one where the two see their struggles for freedom as intimately tied to each other. Olivella's mythic became imperative here as he crafts a fictional world that is attuned to the forced displacement of each group as made possible by the White Wolf. Together, black and Indigenous people could rise up against the White Wolf to avenge their families and community members alike, again, in service to securing their own freedom.

The case against Antonio (and Pedro) highlights how the Spanish Inquisition was able to foment an environment of distrust among people living under the kingdom by encouraging them to snitch on themselves and others. This type of surveillance was crucial to maintaining order in society as people could be tortured to create stories that were possibly not true. Although not the case of Antonio and Jose, as it is clear that Juan Foyos was interested in getting revenge on the two, the case shows how bystanders factor into a process that punishes people for actions they may have not actually committed. Antonio eventually dies and Pedro is charged with *pecado nefando*, and both are essentially lost in the historical record as there is not much else to be known about them. As such, my counter-narrative sought to reimagine their encounter as a moment between two people seeking each other for closeness—not sexual in nature but perhaps grounded in the idea that both felt misunderstood in their own ways. This counter-narrative resituates their encounter as necessary intimacy and not a sexual sin. Read alongside O'Hara's characters Ron and Hammet, I contend that even an embrace between Antonio and Pedro can be

understood as a story of love that transcends the boundaries of right and wrong and even straight/not straight.

Thus, this dissertation has attempted to unsettle two paradigms: (a) the notion that intimacy under slavery is legible only through kinship; (b) the presumption that archival silences necessarily entail ontological absence. Jose and Antonio's alleged crimes, although different, emphasize how ideas related to blackness and black people were grounded in colonial notions of race, religion, gender, and sexuality. These notions powered white hetero-patriarchy in both Old and New Worlds, thus emphasizing the stakes of my project in reading historical documents with and against the grain in service to telling more robust stories about black [queer] intimacies.

In a return to Tinsley, I want to echo her sentiments regarding queer in this dissertation to reaffirm queer as radical and nonnormative. Queer, but the subjects are not always taking on a queer sexual identity. I use queer theory to acknowledge the fluidity of being one may experience in one way or another. Queer, again, as nonnormative. Queer, to stretch our understanding of the relationships among the enslaved, and to engage the prevailing power of systemizing people into commodities and commodities into new gender roles and identities. Queer to emphasize the dissolution of binaries or confines that must be prescribed to or lived in; a frenzied disruption to the colonial/modern gender system.

My hopes are that this disruption lives on beyond the pages of this dissertation, perhaps in a book or digital mapping project. Despite the form it takes, the goal remains the same—to allow oneself to fall into the thresholds between what we think we know and what has yet to be known. There are many ways to do this; however, I propose que(e)rying and critical fabulation alongside archival research to unearth the queer intimacies found in them. These intimacies are only the beginning as a future project would entail traversing more historical documents, those that are criminal case records, and those that are not. At the heart of them though, I hope to expose how the unfolding events were made possible not just by legal and social structures but also by an intimate knowing that can only be fomented by the everyday experiences of closeness. There are myriad emotions, actions, moods, and stories to be learned, and this is only *el Cercano's* first itinerary.

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