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The Word and The Flesh: The Transformation of Female Slave Subject to Mystic Agent through Performance in the Texts of Úrsula de Jesus, Theresa (Chicaba) de Santo Domingo and Rosa Maria Egipcíaca

Rachel Spaulding

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**THE WORD AND THE FLESH:
THE TRANSFORMATION FROM FEMALE SLAVE SUBJECT
TO MYSTIC AGENT THROUGH PERFORMANCE IN THE
TEXTS OF ÚRSULA DE JESÚS (1604-1666),
TERESA (CHICABA) DE SANTO DOMINGO (1676-1748) AND
ROSA MARIA EGIPCÍACA (1719CA-1771)**

BY

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is for my grandmommie and granddaddy, Olive and Bill, whose love empowered me.

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The first class I took with Kathy, *Mujeres y negros en la colonia*, was my first real academic paradigm shift. The way in which Kathy framed the readings made the antiquated texts accessible and relevant. She is an impressive educator and her dedication to her students' learning is unrivaled. She is my Academic Role Icon. For me, reaching that caliber of performance is still years away, however, I have seen how under her guidance I have been able to develop my own ways of approaching early modern texts from a uniquely holistic perspective, informed by interdisciplinary methods. She is an authentic modern day exemplar for academic women's writing.

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and observe how she advocates for the marriage of literary scholarship to historical analyses and methodologies.

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ABSTRACT

Previous research about the African slave experience in the Ibero-Atlantic world has understood slave agency, or more polemically, slave autonomy, through the binary of accommodation versus resistance. However, current African Diaspora scholarship (Schwartz, Thornton, etc.) situates the slave experience within a spectrum of lived experiences. These lived experiences range from accommodation to resistance but often overlap: lived experiences expressed overtly as accommodation reveal covert resistance. My dissertation explores the words of three Afro-women: Úrsula de Jesus (1604-1666), an Afro-Peruvian Mystic, Sister Teresa de Santo Domingo (1676-1748), also known as Sor Chicaba, who lived as a Dominican tertiary in Salamanca, Spain, and Brazil's lay religious Rosa Maria Egipcíaca (1719 ca.-1771).

My dissertation explores the lived experiences and the words of these three female slaves, who negotiated their respective realities within the developing orthodox Catholic religious space in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic world. Specifically, my dissertation examines how these early modern Afro-women created agency, which simultaneously accommodated the aims of the Catholic Church and resisted its homogenizing efforts. Their manipulation of Catholic imagery and religious rhetoric permitted these women to construct a critique of the Catholic religious space: these Afro-women employed the tropes of the female mystical tradition to critique their respective societies and testify to their unique experiences as female slaves in the colonial context.

My dissertation contextualizes within the early modern Ibero-Atlantic slave experience the ways in which these women's disparate texts, the spiritual journal, the hagiography and Inquisition testimony, generate an embodied and historicized praxis. My dissertation considers the similarities and the differences in the content and form of these different texts. As such, I apply different methodological approaches to compare and contrast these women's experiences and their words. First, I compare these women's visions to Catholic imagery and specifically, those images invoked by female mystics to describe their experience with the divine. Second, I compare these visions to images that carry importance in Afro-religious practice. Third, my dissertation applies performance theoretical frameworks to analyze the ways in which these women gave voice to their colonial slave experience. This methodology fosters a way to read these women's voices as testimonies of their unique negotiation and critique of their respective slave societies of the early modern Catholic Ibero-Atlantic world.

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“Ta ló kó wí?/Èlà ló kó wí/

Ta ló kó sọ?/

Èlà ló kó sọ/Ta ní a ti è ñpè ní Èlà?/Hòò tò rọ naà/

Nì à ñpè ní Èlà”

[Who was the first to speak?/Èlà was the first to speak/

Who was the first to communicate?/

Èlà was the first to communicate?/Who is this Èlà?/It was the Hòò which descended/

That we call Èlà] (Abiodun 255).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God, . . .

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,

full of grace and truth”

(*New King James Version Scofield Study Bible*, John 1.1, 14).

INTRODUCTION: THEORIZING THE WORD AND THE FLESH

The primordial significance of communication and the power of words are more than signs signified in religious contexts. Yorùbá mythology, as well as Christian exegesis, plays a monumental role in understanding the significance of the multiple communicative concepts these words convey. We, however, try to reduce words to elicit a singular, somehow, pure meaning. From a Christian perspective, we identify the essence of the meaning of the term *Word* in order to conceive of its relationship to God

and discern the metaphorical meaning of the phrase, “In the beginning there was the Word,” (John 1.1).

1:1 Word. Greek *Logos* (Aramaic *Memra*, used as a designation of God in the Targums, that is, Aramaic translations of the OT). The Greek word means, (1) a *thought* or *concept*; and (2) *the expression* or *utterance of* that thought. As a designation of Christ, therefore *Logos* is peculiarly suitable because (1) in Him are embodied all the treasures of the divine wisdom, the collective thought of God (1 Cor. 1:24; Eph. 3:10-11; Col.2:2-3); and (2) He is, from eternity, but especially in His incarnation, the utterance of expression of the Person and the thought of Deity (John 1:3-5, 9,14-18; 14:9-11; Col. 2:9). In the Being, Person, and work of Christ, Deity is expressed (NKJV Scofield Study Bible 1450).

The term *Word*, therefore, signifies embodiment of divine wisdom and its subsequent utterance, or communication, becomes deified expression in the Christian narrative. From a Yorùbá religious vantage point, Ifá, the Yorùbá belief system of divination, presents us with similar concepts of communication and embodiment. Traditional Yorùbá thought views verbal and visual arts as metaphors and they embody the active essence called *Òrò*. “[. . .] *Òrò* is not the same as the ‘spoken word’ . . . it means ‘a matter, that is, something that is the subject of discussion, concern, or action’” (Abiodun 252).

To discern the essence signified in the term *Òrò*, Yorùbá literature, transmitted through myth, elucidates the meaning of the relationship between the term *Òrò* and God for the Yorùbá peoples.

[. . .] Òdùmàrè then created himself,/ Being the Primal cause,/ Which is the reason we call Òdùmàrè/ The only wise one on earth,/ He is the only cause in creation,/ The only wise one in heaven,/ Who created humans./ When He had no companion,/ He applied wisdom to the situation To avert any disaster./ You, alone, The only one in Heaven/ Is the name of Òdùmàrè/ The only wise one,/ We give you thanks,/ The only-knowing-mind,/ You created man [. . .] (Abiodun 254).

As Rowan Abiodun explains, Òlódumàrè, also known as Òdùmàrè, the Creator, made *Hòpò*, comprised of *ogbòn* (wisdom), *imò* (knowledge), and *òye* (understanding), which are the elemental forces of creation. However, it was not until the descent of *Hòpò* -- wisdom, knowledge and understanding -- to become *Hòpò-rò*, or *Òrò*, that humans could digest and use this power. Importantly, the deity *Èlà* plays an indispensable role in this descent, or transformation. *Èlà* functions as a conduit or filter for the energy-charged, heavenly constituents of *Òrò*.

It is in recognition of this crucial role of *Èlà* in making *Òrò* communicable that the Yorùbá have the axiom, ‘Èlà l’òrò’, which underscores the fact that ‘Èlà relieves *Òrò* of its mystical and enigmatic character’ (Abiodun 255).

The mystical properties of *Òrò* become intelligible and useful for humans only through the filtering processes provided by the deity *Èlà*. “Èlà utters through *Òwe* literally ‘proverbs’ but which in broad usage can metaphorically apply to the communicative properties of the sculpture, dance, drama, song, chant, poetry, and incantations” (Abiodun 255). Thus, *Òrò* in its transformed state is identified with *Èlà*, the deity which functions as a conduit for *Òrò* in the Ifá divination system and is believed by the Yorùbá as the

embodiment of wisdom, knowledge and understanding in all their verbal and visual forms (Abiodun 255).

The etymologies of Christian *Word* and the Yorùbá *Òrò*, suggests an active, divine process of communication between the Creator and the Created, transmitted through embodiment. Thus, God's essence is filtered through divine embodiments that function to conduct the Creator's energy to humankind. Accordingly, if we synthesize Yorùbá and Christian ideologies we might conjure this phraseology to describe the relationship between these terms and God: in the beginning there was wisdom, and the first to express this wisdom was deity, and deity became an embodiment and lived with us.

The following central questions emerge from this re-articulation of Christian and Yorùbá conceptions of divine communication: How do we discern the *Word*? How do we identify *Òrò*? How do we perceive *Èlà*? How to we understand the embodiments of divine expressions that construct our realities and fuel the practices of everyday life? My dissertation explores Christian and Yorùbá expressions of divine meaning for three Afro-Catholic women in the early modern baroque Ibero-Atlantic world. I read their words as syncretic re-articulations of Christian and Yorùbá myth, literature, narrative and poetry. Their re-articulations, their words, become embodiments of their Afro-Catholic expression and fuel their process of transformation from slave subject to mystic agent.

A performance theoretical lens is an especially useful tool to explain this process. The essence of performance is its transformative power. Performance permits the actor the opportunity to reframe an experience so as to alter her audiences' conceptions or redirect their perceptions. Through this redirection, rearticulation,

repetition, reinvention and sometimes restoration, the rendition the actor, or agent, constructs affects change in the perception of others. This construction at once references an embodied palimpsest of past performances and reenactments, and at the same time, creates something new. In this reframing, the power of meaning is harnessed and the actor works to reshape or reconstitute the perception of her audience. In the following introduction, I elaborate this description of the explanatory power of the performance theoretical lens and illustrate how contemporary performance theoretical concepts illuminate the subject positions of these early modern Afro-Catholic women who transformed themselves from slave subjects to mystic agents by rearticulating, reworking and reinventing both Christian and Yorùbá literary and mythical conventions.

My work is rooted in my own personal experiences. Raised in a Methodist family, my early conceptions of Christ steered my perceptions of the world. In August of 2007, I travelled to Rio de Janeiro for an Afro-Brazilian Women's culture and literature course as part of my M.A. curriculum. Dr. Ricardo Santos arranged for our class to observe and participate in a Candomblé ceremony in a nearby *favela*. Admittedly, I was nervous and excited. I was not necessarily apprehensive but I definitely brought my preconceptions about other faith systems into the space. The experience was a spiritual paradigm shift. Expecting not to see God, or at least my idea of Him, He was there. Expecting not to hear the Holy Spirit, or in some way my notion of Her, She was present. The phrase, "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?" (Mark 8.18) took on a new meaning for me. I wanted to understand what I saw and heard in that space and how and why it was different or not so different from my Methodist preconceptions of divinity.

As I continued my trajectory in higher education some of the answers to these questions became clear. In time I realized that it was my own mental projection linked to my own perceptions that made me think I would not see Christ in that space or hear the Holy Spirit during that ceremony. I began to see how my own thought patterns could be viewed as vestiges of the imperial Christian project. My own ideological lens was steeped in the discourses of Othering and I viewed categories of people through Eurocentric filters. Inspired by scholars like Walter Mignolo and Rolena Adorno, I became a colonialist, or early modernist, because I wanted to extricate myself from the dark shadows of the Renaissance. I wanted to explore the unending continuation on the colonial/imperial project and its extension and connection to modernity. In my life and in my writing I wanted to work to expose the agenda of imperial forces that seek to delimit the image of God. This dissertation project accomplishes much more than an evaluation of imperial agendas in the Ibero-Atlantic Catholic world. This project presents a performance reading of three early modern Afro-Catholic women's texts. Their texts foster an interpretation in which these Afro-women actively constructed a critique of their Empire's religious agenda and its connection to the transatlantic slave trade by describing their unique understandings of God and suffering as Afro-Catholics.

My dissertation focuses on the lived experiences of three Afro-Catholic women in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic baroque religious context. I consider their words as their utterances, or performances, of their unique suffering as slaves in the Atlantic world. I read their texts to hear their unique re-articulations of their slave suffering. Their texts foster a reading in which they manipulate Catholic discourse and they use what I term the trope of the female visionary mystic and the repertoire of female sanctity to embed a

critique of their religiously hypocritical slave societies. I suggest that through this performance they were able to shift the perceptions of those in their respective communities. Their performance permitted them to transform their ascribed status as slaves to an achieved status as mystics. From this position, they elaborated descriptions of their suffering, linking themselves to Christ in a unique performance of *imitatio christi* so as to construct a critique of their religiously hypocritical and exploitative Ibero-Atlantic slave society.

In the following sections, first I provide preliminary biographies to each of the three Afro-Catholic subjects of this dissertation, Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa. Then, I discuss the background and interdisciplinary significance of this project. Next, I offer an overview of my methodology and the theoretical framework I use to explain these women's transformation from slave subject to mystic agent. This section discusses the main theoretical concepts I employ throughout the dissertation. Finally, I conclude this introduction with an overview of each chapter of this dissertation.

Preliminary Biographies: Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa

Úrsula de Jesus (1604-1668), an Afro-Peruvian Mystic, composed her spiritual journal between 1650 and 1661 during her life at the Convent of Santa Clara in Lima, Peru. Úrsula was born in Lima, Peru, in 1604. She was the daughter of Juan de Castilla and the slave woman, Isabel de los Rios. She spent the beginning of her life in the house of her mother's owner, Jerónima de los Rios. From 1612 to 1617, Úrsula lived and worked in the house of Luisa Melgarejo, a popular *beata* (lay religious woman) and mystic. When she was about fourteen years old she went to work and reside in the Convent of Santa Clara as the slave of Jerónima's sixteen year old niece, the novice Inés

del Pulgar. Úrsula spent twenty-eight years of her life in toil and servitude as a domestic slave in this convent.

In 1642, Úrsula experienced her transformative awakening: she experienced a brush with death. She lost her balance while hanging her skirt out to dry over a well; praying to the Virgin of Carmen, she was saved. She regained her balance, averting a death fall. This became a pivotal life altering experience that propelled Úrsula's religious contemplation and set her feet on the path towards mystical revelation. This path would allow her to transform herself from slave to mystic. Her dedication to her religious vocation prompted her to request permission to leave the convent and seek out a new owner, one that might allow her to follow her religious calling. Other nuns in the convent were fearful that they might lose Úrsula. In response, one of them promised to buy Úrsula's freedom, and in 1645, she was manumitted.

It took two years for her to decide to become a *donada* -- a religious servant -- and profess her faith, because even as a *donada*, Úrsula would still remain in the convent, subjected to the will of others, working in domestic servitude. In 1646, the year prior to taking her vows, she led a life of excessive religiosity and asceticism, including, self-flagellation, and mortification. Eventually, her exceptional religious devotion led to mystical visions and communication with the divine. She began to hear the voices of the souls lost in purgatory, and she believed herself to be an intercessor, or a co-redeemer, of these souls. Like many religious women, Úrsula, was asked to write down her experiences by her confessor prior to taking her vows. These writings follow in the tradition of female religious writing. However, after 1650 and up until 1661, Úrsula spiritual diary takes on a very different form. Other nuns living in the convent

transcribed many of the entries in her spiritual journal; thus, these entries may have been re-ordered and re-organized. At the age of 62, Úrsula died a good death in 1666, after disposing of all her worldly possessions and confessing her sins. Úrsula served as a religious model of for those in her convent, the Franciscan Order in her community, and the secular population of Lima.

Not long after Úrsula's death, Chicaba was born in West Africa. She would become Sister Teresa de Santo Domingo (1676-1748) and live out her life as a Dominican tertiary in Salamanca, Spain. Her hagiography, *Compendio de la Vida Ejemplar de la Venerable Madre Sor Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo*, was composed by Father Juan Carlos Miguel de Paniagua in 1752. Teresa, or rather, Chicaba, was brought to Spain from West Africa in a slave ship when she was about nine years old. Her hagiography recounts her early life and traces her lineage to noble, royal, parentage in West Africa. She was placed in the household of the Marchioness of Mancera, Juliana Teresa Portocarrero Y Meneses in Madrid. In this household, Chicaba was allowed to dedicate her time to religious devotion, and as her hagiography underscores, she became the religious conscience of the household often inspiring and advising her owners in spiritual matters.

In 1703, Chicaba was freed by Portocarrero's will and provided a stipend under the stipulation that Chicaba enter into religious life. Yet, due to her *casta*, her African origins, she was rejected by many religious houses in Spain. Finally, she gained access to religious community in the convent known as la Penitencia in Salamanca as a Dominican tertiary, only accepted as a servant to other nuns. Her acts of charity, her mystical experiences and her local fame fueled her transform slave to mystic. Her process of

beatification was already underway when Paniagua began to compile her hagiography and prepare it for dissemination within the Catholic realm as a model for religious behavior.

At the time of Chicaba's death in Spain, Rosa Maria Egipcíaca (1719 ca.-1771) was entrenched in public scandal in Brazil. Also known as "a flor do Rio de Janeiro", the West African woman Rosa Maria Egipcíaca de Vera Cruz became a popular saint and the first female writer in early modern, Portuguese-American Brazil. "Santa Rosa", as her followers affectionately called her in her local community of São Sebastião in Rio, was transported from the port of Whydah (present-day Benin), Africa to Rio de Janeiro in 1725. Upon her arrival, she was sold, purchased, baptized and lived in the Freguesia de Candalaria in Rio de Janeiro until she was fourteen. She testified that was "deflowered" by her abusive owner and then sold to Dona Ana Garçês de Morais of the Freguesia de Inficionado, Minas Gerais. In Minas, she was exploited as a prostitute to generate income for her owner and herself; as part of her slave status in Brazil, she had to secure her own sustenance, shelter and survival. Beginning in 1748, Rosa testified that she began to experience pain and various sensations that she attributed to mystical visions and possession experiences.

By 1750, Rosa had gained some credit as a prophet and mystic. Powerful and influential individuals, like Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes, her spiritual confessor, Sr. Pedro Rois Arvelos, her emancipator, and Coronel João Gonçalves Fraga, her wealthier benefactor. Yet there was also great popular opposition to her presence and her heterodox religious performance in Minas Gerais. The growing scandal proved to be the impetus for her move to Rio de Janeiro, alongside Padre Francisco Gonçalves

Lopes. Rosa testified before the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1762 in response to the her denunciation as a sorceress and a fraud. She later testified before the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Lisbon, Portugal between 1763 and 1765.

According to her depositions, those of Padre Francisco, as well as, those of other witnesses and members of Rosa's community, during her time in Rio, Rosa continually experienced mystical visions. Additionally, based upon her claims of mystical intervention and donations from wealthy benefactors, Rosa founded the *Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto*, a shelter for women: single, widowed, sometimes married, Portuguese and criolla, of different *castas* and different social classes, including newly-repentant -- formerly "lascivious" and "wayward" -- women of the city. Within the space of the *Recolhimento*, Rosa wielded power and influence through her claims of mystical visions. Her visions allowed her to manipulate those individuals around her to secure education, shelter, power and fame.

By 1752, she had become quite literate, crafting letters with her own pen and composing her own manuscript *A Sagrada Teologia do Amor de Deus Lus Brilhante das Almas Peregrinas* with the approval and support of her spiritual confessor, Padre Agostinho de São Jose. Rosa was regarded as the regent of the *Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora de Parto* and exercised great judgment and authority within this space. Additionally, she circulated within the community outside the walls of the *Recolhimento*. Ultimately, Rosa's repeated public displays, in which she criticized community members of religious backsliding and hypocrisy, and her performances of mystical and diabolical possession, both in the *Recolhimento* and the Church space, created such notorious and public scandal that her perceived flouting of orthodox

religious practice caught the attention of Dom Antonio do Desterro, the bishop of the diocese in Rio.

Eventually, her unorthodox behavior was brought to the attention of the Portuguese Inquisition. Consequently, Rosa was denounced and imprisoned in Rio de Janeiro in February of 1762. Later she was accused of heresy and false sainthood and prosecuted by the Holy Office of the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon, Portugal, in October of 1763. Ultimately, Rosa's case was never closed and a sentence was never dispensed. However, she remained locked in the secret cells of the Inquisition until her body was discovered dead on the floor of the kitchen on October 12 of 1771.

Background and Significance

My project is the first that offers an in-depth literary analysis of these three Afro-Catholic women's voices and a performance interpretation of their transformation from slave to mystic. Moreover, my work reads for the possible covert, hidden and indirect references to African Yorùbá religious ideology embedded within their texts.

Nancy van Deusen's foundational work *Souls of Purgatory* (2004) examines the writing of Sor Úrsula de Jésus (1604–1668). Her text offers an introduction that situates Úrsula's spiritual diary within the tradition of female religious writing in the early modern period and highlights how Úrsula constructed a corporeal identity as an exploited person of Afro-descent within her convent in Lima, Peru. My dissertation extends the analysis of Úrsula's diary by Van Deusen by applying performance theories to tease out the further possible utterances and critiques of her Peruvian society as well as a Yorùbá interpretation of her mystical visions.

Next, my research examines the hagiography of Chicaba, Sister Teresa de Santo Domingo (1676–1748), *Compendio de la Vida Ejemplar de la Venerable Madre Sor Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo* (1752) written in by Fr. Juan Carlos Miguel de Paniagua. There are only a few religious writings that introduce and summarize this text (Maeso, Álvarez, Houchins and Fra-Molinero). They provide overviews that discuss Chicaba's historical and religious significance. At present, Sue Houchins and Baltasar Fra-Molinero are in the process of composing a critical edition of her hagiography. However, as yet, a close textual analysis and application of performance theoretical concepts to discern her voice, her utterances at the moment of articulation, has not been undertaken. Furthermore, I suggest an intertextual Afro-religious reading of Chicaba's descriptions of her mystical visions.

Finally, my dissertation considers the Inquisitional testimony of Brazil's Rosa Maria Egipciaca. The documents housed in the National Archive the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon, Portugal record her voice and the testimonies of those who denounced her. Luis Mott has offered an extensive biographical work on the life and words of Rosa in his text *Rosa Egipciaca: Uma santa africana no Brasil* (1993). However, I offer a closer reading of these documents, interpreting Rosa's words as a performance of the transformation from slave subject to mystic agent. Moreover, I read her testimony as a marker of her slave experience; these descriptions signal Rosa's subaltern colonial slave identity.

The work that has been done on these women's stories remains limited to socio-historical renderings of their lives and their words. My dissertation project deepens this research. By examining these three Afro-Catholic women's words as performance, I situate these women's lives within their historical settings insofar as to flesh out how

their words acted within these settings. Thus, this dissertation offers a “thick description” of these Afro-women’s performance as articulated by Clifford Geertz who employs Gilbert Ryle’s concept of the “thick description” to delineate the difference between reading for the phenomenological attributes of a given action, or the “thin description”, and the deliberate, precise and redirected attributes of an artifice, or action -- the thick description (215). My research provides a close reading of their words and interprets them as part of the performance of their identities as Afro-Catholic women. Reading their words in this way reveals to what degree these women saw themselves as actively participating within their own experiences as slaves and mystics and as such illustrates how each uniquely accommodated and simultaneously subverted the colonial status quo.

This dissertation links the local, personal slave experiences with the broader discourse of slavery in the early modern Atlantic world, a neglected area as identified by Kenneth Andrien (73). I contextualize Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s descriptions of their individual suffering to the suffering of slaves in the broader Atlantic slave matrix. Additionally, this dissertation’s interdisciplinary and crosscultural methodology appeals to Women’s Studies. As Marjorie Pryse suggests, interdisciplinarity produces cognitive insight about the realities of double-consciousness. Interdisciplinarity as a theoretical approach has the potential to dislocate epistemic privilege and permit a pathway to a more flexible way of seeing that in turn may engender social change. In theorizing about these Afro-women’s lives historically, analyzing their words literally, and applying a performance theoretical lens to both the Catholic and the Yorùbá religious contexts in contact in the Ibero-Atlantic world, this kind of hybrid cross-cultural interdisciplinarity is a methodology necessary and sufficient to produce transformative

knowledge (Pryse 4). This useful approach for Women's Studies also dovetails with imperatives in Africana Studies. As Karanja Keita Carroll points out, Africana studies requires a reframing of its methodologies placing the African worldview as central. Moreover, in this approach the discipline may initiate a transformative educative process that has the potential to change the lives of African descendant peoples (Carroll 5).

My dissertation addresses the methodological concerns raised by scholars in these fields. I apply an Africana centered perspective to read these women's texts. I approach my reading in a cross-cultural method, triangulating these women's experience from African origins, through European transport and into multicultural urban settings in Spain and the New World. I employ diverse literary and historical methods to explain how these Afro-women transformed their own realities and identities to facilitate their own social mobility. My dissertation analyses these women's transformation as evidence of their identity construction as Afro-Catholic in the early modern world. Specifically, this dissertation posits a way of thinking about the Afro-religious worldview alongside the traditional Catholic practice of *imitatio christi* to understand the process of making meaning in the face of traumatic experience for female slaves in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic context.

With regards to Hispanic studies in particular, my research attempts to re-evaluate the subaltern's voice within the Ibero-Atlantic context. Specifically, Chicaba and Úrsula narrated and wrote their stories within the Spanish and Spanish-American context and Rosa wrote and testified within the Portuguese-American landscape. My research contributes to the fields of Hispanic, Lusophone, and Latin American Studies because it

compares these women's voices within disparate geopolitical contexts. This dissertation unveils the similarities and differences of the female slave and female religious experiences in the metropolis in Spain and the colonies in Peru and Brazil. My dissertation investigates the forces that shaped Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Hispanic female identity and responds to the questions: How did these women create agency through both written and oral performances and how do their testimonies provide a unique lens for understanding early modern subaltern subject positions?

Theoretical Frameworks and Methodologies

Colonial Subalterity

In her formative work "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak states that "[i]n the semioses of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of 'the utterance'" (28). My dissertation proposes to examine these Afro-Catholic women's words, their utterances, as "elaboration[s] of insurgency". I appropriate this phrase to discuss the ways in which Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa consciously planned and meticulously constructed their critiques of their respective societies. Their writings belie an overt adherence to Catholic conventions and conceal a covert critique couched in Catholic imagery and embedded in tropes of humility, submission, and self-deprecating rhetoric. I use the framework of Spivak's argument as a point of departure for understanding identity construction, its limitations and implications for imagining and defining the subaltern in the colonial Ibero-Atlantic context. I locate these Afro-women's words and testimonies as the place of "utterance" and the site of performance.

Spivak's timely question offers a useful entry point for understanding how to access and categorize the voices of the past. Their words must be understood from what

would seem to be conflicting perspectives. On the one hand, the fact that we can read these Afro-women's words -- words couched in Catholic rhetoric, words written for Catholic eyes, and more importantly, words recorded by Catholic hands -- illustrates the degree of their own participation and compliance within the hegemonic system. These Afro-women were seen as representable and representative of some part of the colonial imperial project located within the Catholic setting. Their connection to the Catholic Church and residence within the religious space set them apart and privileged their reality. These women, their lives and their words, were linked to the Catholic Church and the lives and words of their spiritual confessors. Thus, these women's lived experiences cannot be discretely understood to be representative of the marginalized quotidian experiences of Afro-women in the Ibero-Atlantic setting.

However, on the other hand, these Afro-women's local and regional fame within their respective communities opened a way for these women to articulate and rearticulate their slave experiences and traumatic suffering. Their slave experiences and the discrimination they experience based on their perceived difference in *calidad* and *casta*, links them to the multitudes of Afro-women who experienced similar suffering in the Ibero-Atlantic slave matrix. The roots of their local fame derive from how they framed their mystic, prophetic and healing practice. By framing it as a Catholic practice, they may have been able to incorporate various Yorùbá images into their worship. Their Afro-Catholic practice may be seen in various lights: it credits the power of the Church and Divine Providence as the overarching impetus of these women's fame; it monitors their thoughts towards the end of cultivating a reflective practice about the Divine's Will in their lives; it illuminates the intensity of their internalization of Church norms; it

illustrates to what degree their understanding of the Divine supports or flouts church doctrine. These women at once reinforce early modern conventions supporting Catholic ideology and resist the normative standard by trying to imbricate a critique of their surroundings. I read their words as echoes of voices that were constrained. Their words point toward the voices of the female slaves in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic religious slave system that were muffled by those positioned to censor, stifle and silence the voice of the Colonial Subaltern.

Spivak posits that “[i]n subaltern studies, because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences” (27). This quote articulates both the limitations and the goal of my research: These Afro-women’s stories, their experiences of suffering and exploitation, were contorted and distorted by imperial Catholic agendas. Their words addressed their early modern audience who trafficked in these kinds of violent imperial episteme and violent disciplinary language that constructed early modern paradigms. The Holy Office of the Inquisition as an institution and Catholic Reformation as a movement of the early modern period sought to impose these violent social paradigms on all its subjects. Thus, my project looks for the radical differences in the viewpoints articulated by these women. Where and how do these women’s words deviate from the imperial discourse? My dissertation discerns the echoes of the Colonial Subaltern voice so as to flesh out nuances in the slave experience and situate those experiences within the continuum of slave accommodation and slave resistance.

Specifically, I examine the Afro-Catholic, syncretic, female slave voice of the early modern period in Ibero-Atlantic culture embedded in these women's various texts. These women's religious practices and their writings overtly adhere to the form of orthodox women's religious writings and practices: these women's texts and their recorded words illustrate their reliance on and use of internal mediation, reiterated prayer, acts of charity, submission, self-deprecation, self-mortification, and invocation of Catholic imagery and liturgical tradition. However, these practices cloak the unique ways in which these women manipulated these practices to belie a more heterodox understanding of their religious faith and convey a critique of their racially stratified society. Their Catholic religious practices are imbued with racial critiques and in many instances, foster a reading of Afro-syncretic religious imagery.

I consider Spivak's framework in exploring the intersections and overlappings of the voices of these women and their spiritual confessors. Through a close analysis of these women's words as related and recorded by male religious, it is possible to trace their voices so as to discern snippets and fragments of the slave consciousness as juxtaposed to their developing consciousness as influential religious mystics in their respective Ibero-Atlantic communities. It is important to highlight these fragments that may represent the slave experience from those that represent the orthodox Catholic mystical experience because it illustrates how these women actively manipulated religious discourse to insert an articulation of an Afro-Catholic voice.

These Afro-women have become, and reductively so, the ideal, or essential and exemplar for religious Afro-female participation within the Ibero-Atlantic context. According to Spivak, by participating within the discourse they cannot "truly"

articulate the voice to the “Other”, the subjected and exploited slave. However, as Spivak also underscores, it is the silences that testify to the traceable voice of the subaltern: “. . . [T]he notion of what the work cannot say becomes important” (28). Thus, I propose that these works, Úrsula’s spiritual journal, Chicaba’s hagiography and Rosa’s Inquisitional testimony, simultaneously give voice to and silence the Colonial Subaltern as they attempt to negotiate and mediate their various social constraints. By using a performance lens, I hope to better “hear” these women’s voices and untangle the c[h]ords so as apprehend the echos of the Colonial Subaltern voice, to identify their “elaborations of insurgency”, thus, to explore their lives and words at the point of “utterance”.

Cultural Agency and Subject Positions

I understand agency as awareness of potential action. As Lawrence Grossberg points out in his chapter in *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996), the questions of agency are connected to the possibilities of action. This dissertation considers how these Afro-women made history in conditions that were not of their own making. Specifically, I suggest that they transformed the significance of their own lived experiences, their slave experiences, by framing their lived experiences as mystical experiences. They each uniquely pulled from the archive and the repertoire of religious women models to facilitate this transformation and they also incorporated aspects of their African religious repertoire. Moreover, I explore the imbrications of their lived experiences, their utterances, their performances, their “elaborations of insurgency”, as points of departure for understanding the simultaneous accommodation and resistance to the early modern status quo. These Afro-Catholic women’s experiences thus become at once

representative and exemplar, and, from a certain angle, their experiences may be read as resistance to the status quo. By teasing out the conflictive overlapping of these Afro-women's subject positions, it may be possible to offer a "thicker" description of their slave experience. It is their awareness of this difference, understood through the contradictions in their subject positions that facilitate these women's transformation from subject to agent within the early modern Ibero-Atlantic Catholic slave system.

In *Discerning the Subject* (1988), Paul Smith asserts that negativity is the catalyst for the transformation from subject to agent. He suggests that this negativity is produced when the subject recognizes the inherently contradictory and "incolligatable" nature of her "multifarious" subject positions (150). In my work, the term subject position refers to the discrete roles and subsequent demands placed on a subject at any given moment. Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa experienced role strain as they worked to accommodate and/or resist the contradictory demands on their person as women, Christians, Yorùbá practitioners, servants, slaves, mystics, healers and writers. They found themselves attempting to reconcile these conflictive demands that typified their daily lives. In choosing to accommodate and/or resist the demands of a particular subject position, the contradictory or opposing subject position is placed in the negative. This negativity suggests that the excessive emphasis placed on the obligations associated with one specific subject position results in the decreased emphasis on the obligations of another subject position. This decrease, or diminishment, of the importance of the obligations of a specific subject position stimulates the awareness of difference by the subject.

Smith's discussion elucidates the emergence of agency for the female subject, suggesting that the "underpinning" negativity, the contradictions, release the subject from

the notion of the “perfect self-identity” (150). The subject’s recognition of the conflict between the demands for the different subject positions fuels awareness and “enjoins the ‘subject’ to construct, recognize and exploit the difference” (150). Importantly, it is the simultaneous deployment of the dialectic between the “fixed” self and the “decentered” self that fosters agency (151).

As Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa became inculcated into their respective baroque Catholic slave societies in the Ibero-Atlantic world; they became aware of their inherently conflictive subject positions. In working to process their respective trauma, understand their captors’ world, as well as the world of other slaves whose labor advanced the colonial/imperial project, these women’s understandings of a “fixed” or one-sided identity slipped away when confronted with the demands of everyday life. Their words reveal recognition of this discrepancy and this difference. Their words relate their struggle to reconcile these “fixed” and “decentered” selves. The awareness of this constant struggle between these “selves” -- this “mutually enabling dialectic” (150) -- foment choice. Thus, these Afro-women posit ways of intervention into the trajectory of their own histories.

It is under the arch of this framework that we may discern agency in the written and oral performances of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa. A close reading of their written texts and testimony reveals that they understood their unique positions as slaves and as black women ranked low in their socially and racially stratified societies. Úrsula describes divine voices admonishing uncharitable and abusive acts of “respectable” white nobility. Chicaba couched the painful memory of her capture in the rhetoric of the Catholic Hand of Divine Providence, which ordains, implements and justifies God’s

Will. Rosa narrated celestial voices and visions that directed her to learn to read and write.

The Afro-women's narratives highlight their various lived experiences as survivors of trauma, exploited bodies, slaves, manual laborers, religious community members, friends, mentors, spiritual penitents, prostitutes, healers, founders of spiritual communities, spiritual mothers, religious mystics, etc. These various subject positions at times contradicted each other. These contradictions can be seen in their writings and testimonies. In the course of their narratives, Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa carefully chose how to construct the ways that they wrote and testified to represent themselves in various social scenarios. From moments of capture, to moments of torture, to moments of religious visions, to moments of conflicts with other slaves, nuns, spiritual confessors, and creole community members, these women transformed each lived experience into an ideal scenario that works as part of a compilation, which in its entirety functions as a performance: a performance that displays the transformation from the lived experience of an exploited slave body to the ideal experience of an influential religious mystic.

My dissertation examines the structural significations of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's words, with the aim of considering the symbolic dimensions of their social actions within their respective communities. Specifically, I label, categorize and situate their lived experiences and their words within the context of the tradition of female religious and mystical writing, the historical context of the slave experiences, and the tradition of the diaspora of Afro-religious practice, specifically, Yorùbá Afro-religious practice. Moreover, I apply performance theories in an attempt to appraise, explain and interpret

the ways in which their lived experiences, and their words at the moment of utterance permitted them to intervene in their own histories.

The Catholic religious space offered these women a place of relative security to access local fame and insert their unique voice. They each used the Catholic religious space as a vehicle for their camouflaged critique of their religiously hypocritical and socially stratified society. While the discursive strategies that these women chose to employ to express their encounters with the supernatural, both divine and diabolical, draws on a wealth of religious tradition, in the forms of liturgical practice, oral tradition, an appeal to Catholic iconography, etc., their respective racial critiques of their societies make these three Afro-women's words unique. I use the term *racial* tentatively because the discrimination these women document was based on their difference with regards to lineage, *calidad*, and class difference, *casta*, as slaves within their respective societies. However, this peculiar discrimination signals the eventual negative treatment based on social differentiation that would be classified as racial difference in the nineteenth century.

From a cultural studies perspective, my dissertation attempts to understand these women's lived experiences, and their recounting of them, specifically, their narrations of their mystical visions, as an interpretation of the narrative structure of their stories. As Michael Pickering suggests in his chapter in *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (2008),

... [w]e talk of 'lived' experience, but experience always involves interpretation of what happens in life, of what makes our perceptions, feelings, and actions meaningful. This depends on how they come into expression and are

conceptualised, organised and given temporal identity, or, in other words, how experience is given the quality of narrative (19).

With regards to my research, I relate and outline the expressions and the conceptualizations of these three Afro-women with respect to their mystical visions. That is, I identify and name the perceptions, feelings and actions that these women (as described in their respective texts) illustrate as meaningful: I summarize their mystical visions and recount their feelings and actions in response to these visions. I explain and locate these expressions within their respective socio-historical contexts and religious traditions. I demonstrate the ways in which their words and lived experiences conform to and diverge from the tradition of female religious writing. This process allows me to question to what degree the ways in which these Afro-women construct a critique of their socially stratified society. By contrasting their writings and visions with the writings and visions of other religious women, I show how their critiques reveal the degrees of discrimination present within their respective stratified societies, with particular attention to discrimination based on racial difference.

Additionally, my dissertation explores the ways in which these Afro-women infuse their mystical visions with images of and allusions to Afro-religious, specifically, Yorùbá practice. My close-reading of these women's words outlines and summarizes these women's visions while highlighting the ways in which these visions are constructed in the disparate texts: the spiritual journal, the hagiography, and the Inquisition testimony. Additionally, within each of their respective works I identify the portions of the text that reveal an Afro-syncretic voice. Ultimately, I interpret the meanings of their words and assess these interpretations to draw explanatory conclusions about the ways in

which these women may have inserted their own Afro-syncretic voice into these overtly orthodox representations of Catholic female religiosity. Overall, my dissertation applies a performance theoretical lens to examine the perceptions, observations, and behaviors of these three Afro-women as described in their texts.

Performance Theoretical Approach

Through my close reading of these women's words, I offer a text-based analysis of their lived experiences and their visions that fuel their transformation from slave to mystic. I use Joseph Roach's concepts of *It*, *Role Icon*, and centrally, his concept of *Surrogation* to explain these women's transformation. These concepts make intelligible how these women fomented local fame within their communities and became exemplary religious women, which allowed them to transform their ascribed status as slaves to the achieved status as mystics. Also, I apply Richard Schechner's concept of *transformation/transportation performance* to make clear how these women changed their social status. I use Diana Taylor's discussion of representation, scenario, and cultural memory in conjunction with Paul Connerton's discussion of social memory, to explore how these women pulled from the archive of the religious female mystical tradition to create their own repertoire for performance as an Afro-religious mystic within their own respective communities. I consider Hayden White's discussion about narrativity and moral discourse to frame Chicaba's hagiography. In the following section, I elaborate my approach to reading these Afro-women's texts and discuss the above various performance theoretical concepts in detail. These concepts work in tandem and form my theoretical framework, which explains Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's transformation from slave subject to mystic agent.

Performance Theoretical Concepts

These Afro-Catholic women transformed the writing process into a performance space. Their respective constructions of their stories, their narrations, facilitated their own transformation. Through the writing process, these women fashioned for themselves, or, in Chicaba's case, in which her spiritual confessor Paniagua overtly fashioned for her, an identity of venerable mystic. These narrations facilitated their transformation from an exploited slave to an influential mystic. It is this process of transformation, this performance, that frames their manipulation of the genres of women's spiritual writing, religious biography and inquisitional testimony. I use performance in contrast to representation because it encompasses the active process of transformation constructed between the writer/performer and the reader/spectator. Thus, by using a performance lens to examine the words of these Afro-Catholic women, and their respective processes of narration, we can flesh out unique dimensions of the slave experience in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic world.

I approach the words of these early modern Ibero-Atlantic Afro-Catholic women from a performance perspective because I see a correlation and a parallel between the ways in which the process of transformation works with regards to performance theories and ways in which the process of transformation works with regards to narrative construction and the genre of spiritual writing. The written texts of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa are performances because their words, narratives and testimonies function in a similar manner. The narrations of Úrsula, Chicaba, and Rosa, perform because they do not simply reflect or represent the socio-political practices of their time but in a sense they are constitutive of them. This assertion is based on Rolena Adorno's argument in her text *Polemics of Possession* (2007). In their own sphere of influence, these women's

words, and more specifically, the construction of the narration of their stories, worked to affect change in their readers' religious perceptions about these women's religious practices. Similarly, performance works to affect change in the performers' and the spectators' perceptions.

The performance lens facilitates an examination of how the writer worked to affect change in the perception of her readers/audience. Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa composed, constructed and ordered their respective narrations, utilizing the voice of God, to illustrate the praxis of how Afro-women religious transform their lived experiences of suffering into ideal experiences as religious mystical visionaries. With respect to Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa they transformed their lived experiences of suffering and the traumatic slave reality to construct ideal experiences as mystical visionaries. The construction of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's stories illustrates their performance as Afro-Iberian mystics.

In the most basic sense, I define performance as the reinvented scripts and re-worked practices that individuals deploy. These re-framed practices reference a previous model, draw on a repertoire and rearticulate a concept or image so as to insert a differentiated perspective. They do this with the overt goal of changing others' perceptions. My dissertation contends that these Afro-women re-invented the trope of the female visionary mystic within their respective baroque Catholic communities. This re-articulation allowed them to incorporate their understanding of their slave experiences and their subsequent suffering to the dominant Catholic discourse. This performance created a space for them to critique their societies and to infuse the dominant discourse with anti-colonial and differentiated ideology. In so doing, Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa

changed their ascribed slave status to the achieved status of mystic in the minds of many members of their socially and racially stratified early modern communities. These women's suffering as slave bodies and commodities in the Ibero-Atlantic slave trade and the associated trauma of these experiences of suffering and deprivation fueled a unique re-articulation of female Catholic suffering and their related displays of *imitatio christi*. The baroque Catholic religious space of the Ibero-Atlantic culture afforded these women a unique setting to construct meaning of their suffering. These women's inculcation to the ideologies of physical suffering and the image of nourishing female flesh as part of Catholic discourse set the stage for their performance role as mystics within their respective communities.

Furthermore, a performance approach is useful to understand how these women religious writers made sense of their surroundings and how they tried to fit their personal experiences into the acceptable and venerable practices of their early modern context because it facilitates an understanding of the process of the transformation of status from slave to mystic. A performance approach to these texts goes beyond categorizing, describing and contrasting the slave experience and the mystical experience in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic setting. At its very core, performance as a word itself encapsulates the aim of this project.

When we deconstruct the term "performance", we see the following components: the prefix "per-" means "through" and/or "intensive", the root "form" means "shape" or "content" and the suffix "-ance" signifies "the quality of" or "the state of". I interpret this basic meaning as, through shape, we have the quality of "something", or by intensive content we get the state of "something". What is this something? What is *It*? *It* is what

these women write about and *It* is what they lived. *It* is the process of transformation and the resulting transformed.

At this point it is imperative to explain how I understand *It* and how I understand and apply the performative definition of transformation. For the sake of clarity, first I will address the former and then the latter. The concept of *It* is explored by Joseph Roach in his text *It* (2007). *It* is one of my theoretical pillars in examining how these Afro-women transformed their status from slave to mystic. Roach partially defines *It* and suggests,

It is the power of apparently effortless embodiment of contradictory qualities simultaneously: strength *and* vulnerability, innocence *and* experience, and singularity *and* typicality among them. The possessor of *It* keeps a precarious balance between such mutually exclusive alternatives, suspended at the tipping point like a tightrope dancer on one foot; and the empathic tension of waiting for the apparently inevitable fall makes for breathless spectatorship (8).

My dissertation examines how the words of these Afro-women may be read as an embodiment of *It* and suggests an understanding of the ways in which they constructed their respective narratives, which appealed to this seemingly contradictory power, the power of *It*. In describing the way in which an individual embodies and characterizes *It*, Roach states that her

countenance somehow keeps a modicum of privacy where none seems possible, a discreet veil of solitude in a world brought into illusory fullness of being by the general congregation of unaverted stares. That countenance, the effortless look of public intimacy . . . is but one part . . . of the multifaceted genius of *It*. The . . .

account of that genius--including its characteristic manifestations of public intimacy (the illusion of availability), synthetic experience (vicariousness), and the *It-Effect* (personality-driven mass attraction) -- is a highly selective one (3). Additionally, Roach suggests that *It* was expressed by the word charisma, a special gift vouchsafed by God, a grace or favor, which sociologist Max Weber then condensed into a principle of “powerfully inspired leadership or authority” (7).

In conjunction with this power, and/or based upon this power, Roach offers another term that is important to my project, *Role Icon*. Roach outlines the performances that permit a particular person to become more than herself by drawing on and playing with meaning both tangible, such as art and architecture, and ephemeral, such as ritual and dance, stored in the “archive and the repertoire” of the collective consciousness of various societal members. Moreover, Roach contends that *Role Icons* are linked to Jungian archetypes, and in tandem with other operating principles, such as accessories, and the *It-Effect*, these individuals occupy a space within the cultural memory that connects them to others in a very intimate and personal way.

Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa reached an unparalleled level of visibility and fame within their respective communities. They each achieved this by drawing on the tropes and models of the religious mystic. As such, members in their community felt akin to these women because they seemed much like the paragons of religious piety that had gone before but at the same time, these women were accessible to community members in their own time. In Chicaba’s hagiography, Paniagua continually highlights that Chicaba was the spiritual epicenter, model and teacher in the Mancera’s noble household. Moreover, he recounts how members of the household repeatedly came to

Teresa for advice and spiritual guidance, especially the Marchioness. Later in her religious community, and then after her death in the larger Spanish community of the early modern period, the recounting and retelling of her celestial visions to those that shared the convent space with her fostered the image of the “Santa Negrita de la Penitencia” which would resonate in the hearts and minds of those who lived in Salamanca. These extraordinary abilities that Chicaba demonstrated during her life and then the fame that she incurred in death worked in tandem, drawing from peoples’ understandings of the mystical identity of revered women, and were grounded by her proximity: She was accessible to her religious community while alive, and her hagiography, published only four years after her death made her image available to those outside the walls of the convent.

Likewise, Úrsula’s relation of her visions of the “Souls of Purgatory” also fostered her fame within her Peruvian religious community. She became an intercessor for the dead and dying. Thus, she was accessible to those living and dead in her colonial society. Her spiritual journal reveals the extent to which many in her society relied upon her for spiritual solace and access to knowledge about the spiritual realm. This connection was based upon the ways in which Úrsula seemed in-step with the mystical role because she was a part of their own community.

Similarly, Rosa became a great force within her religious community of São Sebastião, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She became a popular saint. People sought her out, purchasing “relics” -- biscuits baked with Rosa’s saliva -- in an attempt to possess a portion of her power. Her presence and her performance of exorcisms in the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora de Parto in Rio de Janeiro in the mid-eighteenth century

played an important role in the lives of those around her. As part of my argument to illustrate how these women actively constructed agency within their respective societies, I believe the texts of Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa suggest a reading in which these women carefully constructed their own mystical identities appealing to these forces as outlined by Roach so as to transform their social status from slave to mystic.

In addition to these terms, I also employ Roach's concept *Surrogation*. In his book *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), Roach outlines this theoretical term. He suggests that *Surrogation* encompasses a three-sided relationship: memory, performance and substitution (*Cities 2*). He elaborates to suggest that this process is ongoing in communities, and at times "vacancies" appear and provide an entry point for a person to offer herself up to fill this vacancy. It is in this "vacant" space where I believe Rosa's testimony and the testimonies of those who denounced her facilitates a performance reading in which Rosa confronted Catholic orthodoxy by attempting to surrogate the role of mystical savior in her surroundings. In similar ways, Chicaba's performance understood from her hagiography, and Úrsula's performance read in her spiritual journal suggest they too filled these societal vacancies.

I understand "performance" as repeated, or re-enacted, behaviors of a person or group that are carefully selected from a repertoire of behaviors towards the end of fomenting a desired perception on the part of others. These repetitive behaviors are grounded in and linked to observations and understandings of others' behaviors from originating in separate times/spaces. I use the term times/spaces to refer to other historical periods and other cultural settings. For example, the transitional period from late medieval period time to the early modern time in Western Europe. This historical

time/space contextualizes the cultural significance of a Catholic visionary female mystic, which is transferred to the Americas during the colonial/imperial project. Another example of times/spaces is the time period in certain parts of Western Africa in which notions of Islamic mysticism commingled with heterodox practices of Catholicism. Additionally, other perhaps more relevant times/spaces refers the historical and mythical past of African warriors, rulers and ancestors. References to these previous times, permits their continuation into the present.

In a similar manner, I also use the term times/spaces to reference other cultural practices. Like the different religious and worship practices that characterize Western African religious practice, which have been transferred and reconstructed in parts of Brazil due to large concentrations of certain African ethnic groups -- *nações* -- in parts of Minas Gerais and Rio. Thus, I understand that these distinct times/spaces are flexible. They can be framed, and reframed, as cultural or religious, based upon an individual's particular performance. Thus, these behaviors associated with these times/spaces, in their repetition, may not necessarily carry the same cultural or religious connotations. Consequently, these repeated behaviors are re-framed by locating them within the performance space.

The repetition of these behaviors, including the recounting of an event that incorporates the repetition of specific behaviors, simultaneously refers to something past, brings it into the present, and creates something new in the present. For example, Rosa's visions, which originate in distinct spaces/times, including mental spaces, recounted past events, and highlighted the repetition of specific behaviors associated with the practices of a devout Catholic mystic, such as, mental prayer, writing, fasting, self-flagellation and

confession. By referring to these past spaces, Rosa brings them into the present and at the same time creates something new. Present behaviors are infused with the powerful connotations of the past. Re-inventing the behavior makes it seem as if it were the same behavior from a distinct time/space. However, within another frame -- be it cultural or religious -- it has the intention of affecting a desired reaction, or perception, on the part of another. Thus, as Richard Schechner calls them, these “twice-behaved” behaviors re-create, or reconstruct, the past, bringing it into the present. Additionally, gestures, movements, and speeches, as well as, the presentation of the body, constitute ways to “thoroughly furnish”, as Victor Turner names it, or imbue, a contemporary space/time with the significance associated with its antecedent. This process of thoroughly furnishing a contemporary time/space with past referents works to alter others’ perceptions.

Roach’s theoretical concept *Surrogation* describes that in the present space, a space framed by a particular cultural or religious lens, an individual may present herself as a referent to someone past. In this process of *Surrogation*, the individual is substituting her re-invented behaviors for what is understood to be the initial behaviors. I understand this re-created time/space to be the performance space because it is re-framed. Roach contends that to occupy this performance space, the surrogate appeals to and bases her behaviors on the traditions and behaviors of the past, or on a tradition or behavior from a distinct time/space. Together with the power of memory and the power of substitution, the power of performance, through re-behaving, creates a way for an individual to become more than herself because she inhabits the space of another. She behaves enough like this other to create balance and continuity, but at the same time, behaves in a unique

way so as to inscribe the re-enacted behaviors with enough of herself to alter the re-created space, and affect change in others' perceptions.

I understand Roach's term *Surrogation* in the following way, using the image of Christ as the quintessential example of the process of *Surrogation*. Within specific societies at given points in time we encounter various envisages of the hero or versions of the savior figure. These specific individuals can be understood as templates. While they are often seen as originals, Roach would argue that they more accurately a type of placeholder. I use the image of Christ in the Western Judeo-Christian tradition as an example of this kind of savior in juxtaposition to previous and subsequent charismatic leaders of religious communities. The historical person Jesus of Nazareth performed the role of the messiah -- or Christ -- in his time: he fulfilled the role of savior in the collective consciousness and memory of his followers. Throughout time, many have come to try to surrogate this space, to become a savior for their own community. These stand-ins, at once draw on the shared historical understanding of the image of Christ, re-behaving or (twice-behaving) like Christ, and standing in place for him in particular rituals or ceremonies, Catholic priests for example. Many individuals cannot completely and adequately occupy this space. Roach explains, these "roles" are constructed by the continuing forces of memory, performance and substitution, the process of *Surrogation*, that is, while the exact "original" performer may no longer actually occupy that historical space, in the minds of the individuals of the society, to a certain extent he or she does still "live on".

Much in this way, Rosa's words, as recorded in her Inquisition records, and the words of those from her community, as documented in the denouncements and letters

archived in the Torre do Tombo, lend themselves to an interpretation in which Rosa tried to become a Christ-figure in her own community. She performed healings and had visions and even proclaimed herself to be Christ on the voyage that took her to Portugal for her trial before the Inquisition. While Chicaba and Úrsula did not directly claim to be Christ re-incarnate, unlike Rosa, they do link their suffering to their Divine Spouse in a unique *imitatio christi*, which facilitates their *Surrogation* of the savior role within their communities.

Importantly, Roach contextualizes his theory of *Surrogation* and situates it within a historical setting. He emphasizes the imperative to understand the process of *Surrogation* as working both within cultures and between participating cultures (*Cities* 5). He illustrates the performative space of this process and underscores the importance of liminality: “[Surrogation] is unstoppable because candidates for surrogation must be tested at the margins of a culture to bolster the fiction that it has a core” (*Cities* 6). As Roach notes, this is why the surrogate “appears as alien to the culture that reproduces it and that it reproduces” (*Cities* 6). It is in this liminal space, within the baroque Ibero-Atlantic Catholic world, that these Afro-Catholic women seem to fill this vacancy in their early modern societies.

For example, in Rosa’s case, during her initial experience with exorcism, first as spectator, then as the spectacle herself, she observed in her community in Minas Gerais the power and attraction of the Catholic religious sphere. Moreover, this space afforded her the opportunity to construct her identity and forge a lived experience as mystic that allowed her to escape from the subjected enslaved position and an escape from her experience as an exploited sexual body in her mining community. It is important to note

that in Brazil, or rather Portuguese-America, during the early modern period the religious space depended heavily on lay participation. This lay participation facilitated a heterodox Catholic orthodoxy in the Brazilian colonial matrix. As such, this religious space provided a stage for Rosa's charismatic and/or demonic/mystical performance; as part of my dissertation project, I propose to question why she needed that space and why it seems her community needed someone to fill that space.

Consequently, Rosa through her connection to demonic exorcisms remained aloof, seemingly alien to her society because of her marginal and liminal status. Yet, because of her service in the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora de Parto she seemed accessible and belonging to the public at the same time. Her baroque Afro-Catholic community sought representations and images with which they could identify. Rosa's suffering as a slave, a survivor of the Middle Passage, would not have been unique in early modern Portuguese-America. But what Rosa could offer was unique. She occupied the marginal subject-position of slave, and yet, through her own manipulation of the baroque religious space, she aligned herself with ecclesiastical authority. Subsequently, she used this same imagery to "ordain" her mystical status. This provided her access not only to basic resources, such as food and shelter, but also to societal resources such as education, a resource practically negated to those who shared her similar ascribed status.

Perhaps the fact that the Inquisition tried Rosa is the clearest evidence of Rosa's *Surrogation* of the Christ Role in her Afro-Brazilian community, proving her rupture of social norms. Roach describes the limits of this *Surrogation* allowing that the "fit cannot be exact" (*Cities* 2). Finally, he conjectures that "the very uncanniness of the process of *Surrogation*, which tends to disturb the complacency of all the thoughtful incumbents,

may provoke many unbidden emotions, ranging from mildly incontinent sentimentalism to raging paranoia” (*Cities 2*). Moreover, Roach provides that if such a case occurs, one in which the surrogate begins to belie her role, the focused gaze of the public begins to reveal that the role is not being fulfilled. Thus, “selective memory requires public enactments of forgetting” (*Cities 3*). The Inquisitorial process is this same paradoxical process: It formally emphasizes the works of an individual with the purpose of exposing how and why the individual’s acts are to be forgotten at the same time that they are recorded so as to be remembered. What is highlighted and what is shadowed during this process is the very definition of a selectively remembering what should be forgotten.

Such occurred with Rosa within the overwhelming black population of Minas Gerais. Rosa’s performance resonated with many, but at the same time, the conflation of her suffering with that of Christ’s, hit too close to home (uncannily) and her performance struck a bad chord with some of her society, provoking her flee to Rio de Janeiro. Within the Carioca space, Rosa, alongside a myriad of spiritual confessors and elite benefactors, filled the vacancy of spiritual and physical healer for those in her community longing to understand the pain that typified their daily lives.

My dissertation considers the ways in which Roach’s performance theoretical concept of *Surrogation* facilitates a reading which may explain how Rosa fostered a local fame in her Brazilian early modern community and how she may have entered into the collective consciousness of her Baroque society. Additionally, I consider his terms *It, It-Effect* and *Role Icon* to explain Rosa’s transformation from slave to mystic, as well as to explore the transformations of Úrsula and Chicaba as discernible in their respective

texts. Roach's performance theoretical concepts generate a reading of the words of these Afro-women as embodiments of transformation from slave to mystic.

I consider these concepts during my analysis of the performative process of transformation. These concepts support my argument for a performative reading of Úrsula's, Chicaba's, and Rosa's written texts and testimonies. I consider the ways in which each of these women manipulates the Catholic religious space, to illustrate themselves as a perfect mediator or intercessor for the divine. For example, Úrsula records various times in which the images of dead souls in purgatory came to her in a vision pleading for intercession. Chicaba's biographer narrates an incident in which she is responsible for the conversion of the Turkish girl servant in the Mancera's household -- a conversion that all other Catholic priests fail to solicit. In her visions of the Sacred Hearts, Rosa confesses to be the way in which all others can come to know the love of the family of Christ. Each of these examples illustrates how these women attributed to themselves, or how others attributed to them, the power of intercession and transformation -- quintessential Christ-like characteristics. These women not only had the power to transform others opinions of them, but to transform themselves from slave to mystic.

I employ Richard Schechner's theoretical concept of *transformation/transportation performance* as outlined in his work *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985). In "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed", Schecher interpellates the relationship between religious practice and staged theatre. He states that theatrical reality is marked "non-ordinary" (117). This is what marks the productions of these women religious writers: They are non-ordinary. In fact, they are

exemplary. Schechner suggests that transportation and transformation performances coexist (130). Schechner offers that there are performances where the performers are transformed. This transformation occurs through a series of "transportation" performances. In these types of performances, the performer

goes from the "ordinary world" to the "performative world," from one time/space reference to another . . . [She] plays a character, battles demons, goes into trance, travels to the sky or under the sea or earth: [she] is transformed, enabled to do things "in performance" [she] cannot do ordinarily (126).

In these Afro-women's descriptions of their mystical visions, in their individual prophetic practice and visions of purgatory, these Afro-women repeatedly transported themselves to the space of the supernatural. These repeated transportations facilitated their gradual transformation. Those in their religious community began to see them as mystics rather than slaves. These women accomplished this transformation through their performance as devout Catholic religious women. Victor Turner traces the performance's etymology to the Old French meaning "to thoroughly furnish" (82). Importantly, he notes "performance does not necessarily have the structuralist implication of manifesting form, but rather the processual sense of 'bringing to completion' or 'accomplishing'" (82). Similarly, Schechner draws on Levi Strauss' imagery employing the analogy of the transformative process of cooking food to understand what is art, and by extension performance. The lived experiences are the raw food. The process of transformation, the art of cooking, substantially changes the lived experience into the cooked, palatable experience (*Performance Theory* 30). This palatable experience is what I call the ideal or perfect Catholic visionary mystic experience.

Performance is the process of using lived experiences as bricks, or stones, to construct and transform ourselves by giving them a different shape, a unique content. We thoroughly furnish these experiences to arrive at a structured end product that reveals the essence of the perfect or ideal experience. Úrsula describes her own circumstances and her understanding of them when she discloses how those around her treat her in her religious community. She writes: “They tell me to suffer all that happens without complaint or criticism, not letting anyone know how I really feel, as though I were a stone. Do I not see it? What happens when they step on the side of the brick that does not move and then on those bricks that are loosely placed?” (104). In this excerpt of her spiritual journal, Úrsula reveals how she is aware of the ways in which her actions construct hers’ and others’ perceptions and experiences. Moreover, she equates her actions and her character to a well-placed stone. She is transforming her experience as a slave in which the society is literally constructed on her labor to an ideal experience as a religiously devout mystic who incorporates the figurative meaning of a religious community that constructs its society upon its character and strength. Performatively, she manipulates the imagery of the stone. By equating herself with the image of the stone she equates herself with Christ. “The stone which the builders rejected/Has become the chief cornerstone/. . . And whoever falls on this stone [Christ] will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21.42-44). Úrsula transforms herself from slave to mystic and she uses various images to represent this performance. Thus, performance refers to the process of transformation from the ordinary into the extraordinary; however, representation is an integral part of this practice of transformation.

This dissertation takes into consideration the conceptual relationship between performance and representation. In her text *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor argues that performance as a term refers to a process, “a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, a means of intervening in the world” (15). Many women religious writers worked within the genres developed by their foremothers, such as the *vida espiritual*, and used, mimicked and re-invented the scripts “authored” by their foremothers. Thus, religious women employed scripts, or appealed to the trope of the female visionary mystic to represent themselves as Catholic mystics and fuel their process of transformation. Taylor emphasizes that performance theory helps to bridge the gap between the archive -- documentary evidence and writings classified as literature -- and the repertoire -- systems of knowledge packaged and delivered via culturally specific embodiments, such as gestures and actions. Taylor argues that the repertoire compiles the behaviors that diffuse cultural memory. She describes her method for examining the repertoire as “look[ing] to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors and potential outcomes” (28). As Taylor outlines, the scenario “demands that we pay attention to milieux and corporeal behaviors” (28). Significantly, “[i]ts portable framework bears the weight of accumulative repeats” (28).

These Afro-women’s performances reference this framework, the repertoire of female sanctity, which is based on the practices of religious women like Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Ávila. This repertoire is, to use Victor Turner's phrase, "thoroughly furnished" by the following: vocal prayer, religious dress, visionary and prophetic gifts, dialogues with celestial voices, Eucharistic practice and the confessional act of writing.

These Afro-women's writings do more than reference the repertoire of saintly women, they rework saintly women's realities to create meaning for Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's own lived experiences as slaves and critique the hypocritical nature of their religious communities. These women used this framework, the archive and the repertoire of female sanctity to construct fame within their communities and enter into the social memory of their respective societies.

In his work, *How Societies Remember* (1989), Paul Connerton states that “[g]roups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised and memories are localised by a kind of mapping. We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the groups. But these mental spaces . . . refer back to material spaces that particular social groups occupy” (37). We can conceive of these famous foremothers' stories as mental spaces, as Catholic mystic imaginaries. Their *vidas*, the sermons, and songs and prayers, that reference their stories, as well as the iconography that depicts them, construct a mental space, a baroque imaginary, so to speak.

In her chapter, “Memory as Cultural Practice”, Taylor suggests that cultural memory is “a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection” (82). These Afro-women's mystical experiences, their visions and their conversations with Christ are their practice. Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa manipulate the trope of the female visionary mystic. This is at once an act of imagination that builds upon the mental spaces created by the hagiographic tradition in baroque society and an interconnection to the memories of these mental spaces, the spaces the social group, female saints, occupy. Furthermore, Taylor suggests that one can performatively read how the “body functions as the site of

convergence binding the individual with the collective, the private with the social, the diachronic and the synchronic, memory with knowledge” (80). Religious women used their bodies as the spaces to create their social agency. Their bodies can be seen as the stage for their performance. What they did to their bodies and how they carried out those actions generated reactions from their communities and facilitated their inclusion into the category of mystic women. Their bodies were their own but, by referencing the repertoire of female sanctity, by engaging in asceticism, by mortifying their flesh, by flagellation, and by other kinds of penance, these women engaged with the frameworks and mental spaces already at work within their baroque Catholic society.

Taylor’s theoretical concepts of representation, scenario and frameworks as cultural practice work in tandem with Connerton’s theories about social memories. Early modern religious women in the Ibero-Atlantic world appealed to the archive and the repertoire of female sanctity and manipulated the trope of the female visionary mystic. These religious women used their bodies as performances spaces. Their bodies functioned to create their unique memories that were simultaneously private and social, individual and collective, understood in the moment and across time. In this dissertation, I discuss the unique ways in which these Afro-Catholic women used their bodies as a performance space for their unique suffering as slaves. They link themselves to Christ in a differentiated *imitatio christi*. Their performance as devout religious women facilitated their transformation from slave to mystic and facilitated their fame within their respective societies.

In the writings of women religious of the early modern period, and in their attempt to mimic the ideal types laid out by these foremothers, I argue that the break

between the real and its representation, the ideal, is discernible. In Úrsula's journal, Chicaba's hagiography and Rosa's Inquisition testimony, I discern the places when the writer is following the scripts of the genre, representing herself as the bedeviled daughter of Eve, and when she is reworking this genre, describing the real experience of her slave life through a couched critique of her racially stratified society, as in the example above when Úrsula equates herself to Christ through the image of the stone.

My dissertation untangles these images so as to discern these Afro-Catholic women's voices. I examine how their utterances reveal their lived experiences as slaves in the Ibero-Atlantic Catholic world. I read these contradictory representations of the religious self as examples of agency. It is in the space between the narrations that draw on the representations of the self, the scripts, or the ideal experiences, based on the tradition of women's religious writing and the narrations of the slave experiences based on suffering and trauma that we encounter the performance and the transformation in the texts of these Afro-Catholic women religious writers.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter one situates Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa within the socio-political and historical context of the Atlantic world. I employ a Circum-Atlantic perspective to discuss the social and economic factors that impacted these women's lived experiences in the transatlantic slave trade. I discuss the debates of the slave trade in the Southern Atlantic and its relationship to Just War theory. This chapter provides descriptions of slave suffering, engaging in the broader discourses of Atlantic history and offers a close reading of Chicaba's, Úrsula's and Rosa's words that describe their unique individual suffering as slaves in the Catholic Ibero-Atlantic world. This chapter links these Afro-

women's captivity narratives with the broader discourses in Atlantic scholarship, as previously stated. It discusses the processes of ethnogenesis in this Afro-women's identity construction and employs the literary tool of *textual marronage* to detect these Afro-Catholic women's critique of their respective slave societies.

Chapter two discusses the Catholic context of these women's words. This chapter provides an overview of tradition of the female mystic and the understanding of female authorship in the early modern period. This discussion relates to the specific ways in which Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa drew on, modified and manipulated Catholic imagery. It provides an understanding of the role of the female mystic in order to contend with the structures of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's respective societies. Specifically, I discuss the venues of female authority and how Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa accessed these venues. I elaborate on the importance of Catholic imagery with respect to the female body and food. I contextualize the importance and understanding of suffering with respect to the religious paradigm as well as ways in which Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa may have understood suffering in dialogue with Catholic tradition and the suffering as a slave. This chapter also addresses Afro-mysticism and New World syncretization. It considers the possible ways in which Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa inserted Afro-voices into the dominant religious rhetoric. It provides an overview of spirit possession and the syncretic practices of Afro-spiritists and popular beliefs of Ibero-Atlantic peoples.

Chapter three addresses the life and writings of Úrsula in her colonial Peruvian context. I analyze Úrsula's spiritual journal and use performance theories to illuminate the ways in which she constructed her own corporeal identity, using her body as a

performance space to facilitate her entry into the social memory of her religious community. She emphasizes the role of physical work and labor as evidence of religious dedication and worship and compared this work ethic to (white) members of her community to critique their laziness and their pseudo-religious practice, which underscores their hypocrisy. I explore how Úrsula's words reveal different aspects of the slave experience with particular attention to the urban Limeña Spanish American setting. Additionally, I read her Palm Sunday mystic vision from a Yorùbá religious practice to reveal a syncretic image of the Yorùbá spirit possession ritual known as mounting.

Chapter four explores and analyzes the words and the performance Chicaba, Sister Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo. It discusses her experiences as a slave in Spain and in the Mancera's Household. I examine the construction of her hagiographical text with specific reference to Hayden White and his understanding of the form of the content of a narration. Specifically, I argue that Chicaba achieved fame within her own society based on her performance as a devout Catholic. Moreover, I discuss the ways in which the Catholic clergy and hierarchy appropriated Chicaba's story to control her growing popularity within her community.

Chapter five focuses on the testimony of Brazil's Rosa Maria Egipcíaca. This chapter discusses the differences between the Portuguese American and the Spanish American context insofar that it illuminates and directly relates to how Rosa Maria experienced her oppression and her life and dealings with her community and the Inquisition. This chapter analyzes her testimony and the testimony of others in her community as well as various letters authored not only by Rosa herself but also by those

closest to her. This chapter addresses the notions of spirit possession and diabolical possession as understood in Brazil in the early modern period. It examines the ways in which Rosa manipulated Catholic food imagery to perform her identity as a mystical healer. In this chapter, I provide a close reading of her words and apply performance theories to understand how Rosa's words transformed her from a slave to a mystic in her own time.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ROCK AND THE HARD PLACE -- A Circum-Atlantic

Perspective of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's Slave Experiences

The horrific stories of suffering for enslaved persons and Middle Passage survivors transcend early modern scholarship. One thing is to write about these stories dispassionately, quantifying through historical analysis an utterly unquantifiable experience. Documents of ship manifests, trade routes, contracts of sale, census data and chronicles about living, or rather, surviving conditions on the slaving ships and in slave societies, can relate disparate facts that present as mere echoes of a reality relegated to the discursive space of Atlantic Studies. The commodification of black human flesh cannot be unchained from its worth perceived in labor hours, days, years and lives spent in servitude and submission. To write about these stories passionately, reading closely through a literary analysis is to reveal the embodied memory of the slave experience, to read for the pain, the anguish, and the realization of the requisite endurance of submissive servitude. But it is something else to write about the transformation of this slave experience. I write to contextualize this suffering, accounting for the historical analysis of the slave experience in the broader early modern Circum-Atlantic field and incorporating a literary analysis that considers the words of those who endured this suffering.

This dissertation discusses how three early modern Afro-women used Catholic discourse to mediate their suffering during their captivity and enslavement experiences. Úrsula de Jesús (1604-1666) was an Afro-Peruvian religious mystic in the Limeña convent of Santa Clara. In adherence with Catholic practice, she wrote a spiritual journal; this journal details her mystical visions and describes her experiences as a

laboring and suffering slave body. Chicaba, also known as Sister Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo (1676-1748), was captured off the West African coast as a girl and later became a member of the Dominican Third Order at *La Penitencia*, the convent of Saint Mary Magdalene in Salamanca, Spain. She wrote various letters and poems and drafted her own *vida*; these were destroyed in a fire leaving only one parchment with her signature intact (Houchins and Fra-Molinero, *African Biography* 542). Her official hagiography composed by Father Juan Carlos Miguel Paniagua, first published in 1752, contextualizes Chicaba's captivity, enslavement and mystic experiences. Rosa Maria Egipçíaca (1719c-1771) was shipped from the West African Slave Coast port of Whydah and sold in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She became a religious *beata* and popular saint in her Catholic communities. She wrote a manuscript, *A Sagrada Teologia do Amor de Deus, Luz Brilhante das Almas Peregrinas* (ANTT, Pro. 9065, Fl. 16v), however, it seems to have been burned; only a few pages of her manuscript are inventoried. These remaining pages are compiled alongside her Inquisition testimony and her personal correspondence archived in the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon, Portugal and they attest to her mystic experiences and her suffering in the Atlantic world.

This chapter responds to a challenge identified by Kenneth Andrien. He suggests that while the Atlantic perspective places emphasis on movement and brings into focus the active role of Africans in the Atlantic world, current scholarship rarely succeeds in connecting local and regional communities to the broader Atlantic context. He charges that scholars have "found it difficult to link [slaves'] everyday experiences to broader structural changes occurring in the Atlantic world" (73). Additionally, James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, in their call for scholars to map ethnogenesis, claim that to

grasp the kind of cultural change that occurred to peoples in the Atlantic Basin, scholars need to “step back from typologies based on generalizations about the various national-imperial Atlantic experiences” (184). Moreover, they highlight that the processes that fueled this cultural change were “fundamentally driven by local variables” (184). Ethnogenesis is one such process that fuels cultural change and describes identity construction. It is the process of constructing, or re-constructing, a new identity. It can be conceived of as a cultural dialogue aimed at relating the powers of authority and coercion to the individual experience and “reveal[ing] the politics of social difference” (Voss 1). The process of ethnogenesis allows scholars to tackle the negotiation between what one calls herself and what others are willing to call her (Voss citing Hitt 1). This dissertation illuminates the process of identity construction for Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa. It focuses on the “flashpoints . . . in social conflict” (Voss 1), highlighting how these Afro-women understood themselves during their transformation from enslaved subjects to mystic agents and how others perceived them.

To map Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s ethnogenesis, I take up Andrien’s charge and respond to Sidbury’s and Cañizares-Esguerra’s call. I construct a methodology to “examine the connections between the individuals, localities and regions” (Andrien 73) of Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s slave experiences. This method highlights how these Afro-women sought “[. . .] to re-embed themselves into communities, creating new identities rooted in the transformations that forged the early modern Atlantic World” (Sidbury and Cañizares-Esguerra 185). This chapter responds to the following lines of inquiry: To what degree were these Afro-women aware of their commodification in the Atlantic slave trade? How did these women manipulate Catholic discourse to mediate

their captivity and enslavement experiences? How did African (or what I term Pan-Yorùbá) perceptions affect these women's performances in the Catholic space? How might one recover the voices of these women through these highly mediated texts?

Methodology: Circum Atlantic Interculture, Textual Marronage, Hybridization and Ethnogenesis

In the following section, I apply literary and performance theory to historical texts about Africa during the era of the Atlantic slave trade to analyze enslavement experience in diaspora in the Atlantic world. To explain Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's hybrid identity construction and their transformation from slave subject to mystic agent, I deploy Joseph Roach's *Circum-Atlantic interculture*, Margaret Olsen's *textual marronage* as linked to Nelson García-Canclini's *hybridization* and James Sidbury's and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra's, Barbara L. Voss's and Rachel Sarah O'Toole's *ethnogenesis*.

Joseph Roach's term *Circum-Atlantic interculture* facilitates a connected reading of these Afro-women's slave experiences and their re-articulations of Catholic rhetoric within the littoral Atlantic culture. Roach defines this interculture as a sharing of contributions of many peoples of the Atlantic rim and suggests that a performance lens permits the discernment of this active confluence (5). Furthermore, Roach suggests that there are at least three ways to view this performance. First, performance may be seen as individual. For example, the specific ways in which Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa portrayed the role of visionary mystic in their religious communities. Second, as performance tradition, or, the ways in which these women reinvented the trope of the female visionary mystic to enhance and buttress their specific performances. Third, the ways in which others perceive and classify performative acts: the ways in which these Afro-women's

practices were interpreted as orthodox or heterodox within the Atlantic field. I suggest that these women's religious practices can be read as their performances and that they are products of these women's movement through various cultural spaces. Ultimately, these performances are manifestations of their hybrid identities constructed in the Circum-Atlantic world. These women's descriptions of their slave experiences are intertwined with religious rhetoric and are best read as performance. Performance theory is key to explaining how these Afro-women transcended their slave experiences and transformed themselves into revered mystics.

I juxtapose these Afro-women's movements within the *Circum-Atlantic interculture* with their textual agency. I deploy Margaret Olsen's concept *textual marronage* to read these Afro-women's descriptions of the slave experiences. Olsen suggests that the concept of *textual marronage* may be a useful tool for critical literary analysis of the utterances of subaltern speech in colonial texts. She argues that *textual marronage* is a concept that reveals the ways in which the subaltern manipulates hegemonic discourse so as to evade authorial control and produce meaning that contradicts or goes beyond imperialist language. Úrsula, Chicaba, and Rosa embedded descriptions of their slave experiences in religious hegemonic discourse. In order to reveal and read their descriptions of the exploitative and painful reality of their experiences, it is imperative to focus on the ways in which their words circumvent authoritative control: although these women's texts rearticulate Catholic tropes, they produce contradictory meanings and convey a couched critique of Catholic control.

These women's descriptions of their suffering challenge the Catholic hegemonic and imperial discourse that emphasizes the justice in enslaving individuals who would

otherwise live out their lives as barbarians, pagans and alien to Christ (Schorsch 155). Pain and agony are justified in the broader religious context because suffering brings an individual closer to Christ (*La corónica* 102). These women's texts generate readings that counter this discourse. Their textual productions foster a reading in which the agony, exploitative suffering and pain they experience outweigh the imperial justification. These descriptions highlight abject suffering similar to Christ's suffering at the hands of others, such as the Sadducees and Pharisees, Caiaphas, Herod, Judas, Peter, and Pontius Pilate. This is not the kind of suffering Christ chose freely. Since these women link their suffering to Christ in this way -- the suffering they choose versus their abject suffering at the hands of their oppressors -- these women's texts may be read as a denouncement of the anti-Christian foundation of the transatlantic slave trade.

Textual marronage also facilitates an understanding of these women's words as evidence of their cultural hybridity. Olsen references Nelson García-Cañclini's term *cultural hybridity* that goes beyond the mere fusion of two cosmologies. An individual who entertains seemingly contradictory cultural paradigms so as to accommodate and resist various aspects of the separate paradigms to negotiate her subject position at different junctures performs a hybrid identity. Specifically, García-Cañclini uses hybridization to discuss how individuals deploy disparate subject positions to address situations of asymmetrical power differentials. Hybridization occurs in spaces typified by numerous and varied interactions, transactions and cultural exchanges between individuals "implicated in cross-cultural relations" (García-Cañclini 9). *Textual marronage* and *hybridization* facilitate a historicized literary reading of these women's performances. Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's texts go beyond a fusion of African -- or

pan-Yorùbá -- and Catholic cosmologies. Their texts highlight how these women negotiated various aspects of these seemingly contradictory cosmologies to accommodate and resist their cultural paradigms at different points. *Textual marronage* is the discursive strategy that affords the ability to hear the subaltern, providing ways to read the heterogeneity of imperial texts so as to hear the utterances of the subaltern. It fosters a way to understand how the hybrid individual disrupts notions of cultural homogeneity and fixity, the false basis of imperial discourse.

The flashpoints in the process of *ethnogenesis* become clear in using *textual marronage*. A close reading of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's texts illuminates different phases of these women's hybrid identity construction. Scholars like Voss, Sidbury and Cañizares-Esguerra use *ethnogenesis* to understand the ways in which new identities are constructed in transculturated spaces. African diaspora scholars like Rachel Sarah O'Toole, whose work "seek[s] to disrupt a monolithic construction of a singular black identity" (21), takes this exploration further, highlighting the intricacies of disparate notions of perceived African identity in diaspora. *Ethnogenesis* takes into account the various intra-African relations and interactions with the Atlantic world to reveal a complex meaning of hybrid African and ethnic identities in an Out-of-Africa setting.

Ethnogenesis and *textual marronage* permit a reading in which Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa replicate, resist and subvert hegemonic religious discourses to create counter-hegemonic critiques. In this chapter, I analyze examples of these women's texts that I believe relate their subaltern experience. In the subsequent sections, I compare these women's descriptions of their suffering with historical texts that describe suffering in the Atlantic world. This comparison links these women's local slave experiences to the

larger understanding of the slave experience in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic world. Before examining each woman's story in detail, in the following section, I provide a historical background of the Ibero-Atlantic slave trade and an overview of its mechanisms of enslavement and transport. I review the constitution of polities and ethnicities in the context of that emerging trade. This trade was typical of Pan-Yorùbá transculturated practices. I delimit my use of the term Pan-Yorùbá in the following section, discussing the internal African participation in the slave trade, the expansion of the Oyo Empire, and the emergence of slave ports such as Whydah and Allada that facilitated Pan-Yorùbá slave trade.

Historical Backdrop: The Early Modern Slave Trade in the Circum-Atlantic

The horrors of the Atlantic slave trade are well documented. In the fifteenth century, chroniclers described the experiences of enslaved persons. Gomes de Zurara's 1444 description of the first slave ships unloading their human cargo relates how many onlookers were horrified by the exploitation of human bodies. Zurara's *Chronicle* provides an eyewitness description for the kind of suffering that Chicaba and Rosa would have experienced during their embarkation from the African coast and their disembarkation in Seville, Cartagena and Rio de Janeiro:

For some kept their heads low and their faces bathed in tears, looking one upon another; others stood groaning very dolourously, looking up to the height of heaven, fixing their eyes upon it, crying out loudly, as if asking help of the Father of Nature; others struck their faces with the palm of their hands, throwing themselves at full length upon the ground; others made their lamentations in the manner of a dirge, after the custom of their country. And though we could not

understand the words of their language, the sound of it right well accorded the measure of their sadness. But to increase their sufferings still more, there now arrived those who had charge of the division of the captives, and who began to separate one from another . . . (as cited in Russell-Wood 30).

By 1500, close to one tenth of Seville's population was composed of African slaves (Blackburn 58). Iberian perceptions and attitudes about the slave experience represent different aspects of the slave trade. Instead of merely focusing on the exploitation of slaves as human flesh, Tomás de Mercado, a Jesuit friar who witnessed and chronicled the disembarkation of slaves in Seville in the sixteenth century, highlights the economic value of enslaved persons by comparing them to other goods in transport. Mercado records the horrors of the slave experience but also highlights the economics involved in the trade. In attempting to highlight the complex legal and illegal aspects of the slave trade, Mercado compares the commodification of slaves to that of other goods such as clothing. His description provides a contextualized reality of the deplorable and pathetic conditions experienced by enslaved persons. At the same time, he underscores the perception of the slave as a commodity to be shipped and used:

los tratan cruelísimamente en el camino cuanto al vestido, comida y bebida. Piensan que ahorran trayéndolos desnudos, matándolos de sed y hambre, y cierto se engañan, que antes pierden. Embarcan en una nao, que a las veces no es carraca, cuatrocientos y quinientos de ellos, do el mismo olor basta a matar los más, como en efecto mucho mueren, que maravilla es no mermar a veinte por ciento . . . Y tanto más en este género de contratación cuanto la ropa que se vende es capaz de injuria y violencia, y se les hace gravísima e irrecuperable, pues

pierden para siempre su libertad, que no tiene valor ni precio. Aún cualquier otra ropa, con no ser capaz de injuria siendo irracional, con solo creer probablemente ser mal habida o ajena, no puede nadie mercarla sino para solo volverla a su dueño; por lo cual condenamos a los ropavejeros cuando mercan lo que probablemente creen ser hurtado y los plateros si mercan de los que creen verosimilmente ser ladrones. Cuanto menos convendrá mercar negros de quien se tiene por cierto que o los más o muchos de ellos son mal habidos y peor traídos (*Suma de tratos y contratos*, cap. XXI).

This description of slave suffering through an economic lens addresses the broad discourse of the economic implications of the transatlantic slave trade and offers a glimpse into the local story of the enslaved person's experience. In comparing this description to other contemporary descriptions, we can link these broader themes of capture, deprivation, suffering and abuse to Chicaba's, Rosa's, and Úrsula's individual and local realities. The following is an excerpt from the *Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua* that relates his experience as an individual transported into slavery from the African coast to Pernambuco, Brazil. As the description above by Mercado suggests, the conditions of the slave ships that sailed between West Africa and Seville were similar to those of the transatlantic voyages described by Baquaqua:

Its horror, ah! who can describe. None can so truly depict its horrors as the poor unfortunate, miserable wretch that has been confined within its portals! . . . We were thrust into the hold of the vessel in a state of nudity, the males being crammed on one side, and the females on the other; the hold was so low that we could not stand up, but were obliged to crouch upon the floor or sit down; day and

night were the same to us, sleep being denied us from the confined position of our bodies, and we became desperate through suffering and fatigue. Oh! the loathsomeness and filth of that horrible place will never be effaced from my memory; nay, as long as memory holds her seat in this distracted brain, will I remember that. My heart even at this day, sickens at the thought of it . . . (Conrad 25).

Experiences of food deprivation are well substantiated and played a significant role in the ways that survivors constructed their identities. Chicaba and Rosa became members of religious communities where food asceticism was commonplace. As will be discussed later, this specific form of suffering may be linked to the unique ways in which Chicaba and Rosa use food imagery in their mystical experiences.

The suffering experienced on slave ships was extreme, yet this suffering was not limited to the onboard ship experiences. Slaves endured agony and pain upon arrival not only during their time waiting for sale on the auction block, but once they were bought, their bodies were exploited for their labor. Many enslaved persons transported to Spanish American colonies came from the Ports of Seville and Lisbon in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries. Upon arriving in Cartagena de las Indias, they were then transported to Portobello on the Caribbean side of the Isthmus of Panama, taken by land across to the Pacific and then shipped to Callao, Lima's entry port. This second phase in the transatlantic shipping process lasted about four to five months, doubling the time of the trip from Africa to America (Klein 29). When slaves reached Lima, they were sold throughout the rest of the Viceroyalty. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, the demand for slaves in Lima increased and "slavers came to dominate the Panama-Callao

commerce in Africans” (Bowser 55). In the following excerpt, Alonso Sandoval, a Jesuit priest and chronicler of the slave experiences in the New World, describes slave treatment and conditions of slavery in Cartagena during the seventeenth century:

Their masters beat them until their skin falls off and they die from the cruel blows and horrible torture. Masters will do this for any trivial infraction. Or they terrorize them until they die, rotten and full of worms. Every day the courts hear cases with accounts of this kind of abuse. Many times I have seen things with my own eyes that make my heart cry out with shame. No one could see a poor black man covered in terrible wounds from beatings done for no reason whatsoever without feeling moved to pity. If slaves do not show up for work one day, their masters will shackle yokes with four cruel spikes in them to their heads. [. . .] I can hardly describe the cruel way that slaves are imprisoned in chains, fetters, handcuffs, shackles, balls and chains, collars, and other horrible inventions designed to imprison and punish them . . . We might be able to ignore the physical treatment, if their masters spoke to them more kindly, because verbal insults are more hurtful; however, slaves are constantly insulted by being called dogs, bozales, horses and many other rude names (68).

Such historical descriptions of the mechanisms of enslavement, Middle Passage transport and slave suffering in the early modern Circum-Atlantic function as the historical backdrop for Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s stories. Zurara’s, Mercado’s, Sandoval’s and Baquaqua’s descriptions of pain and suffering on the slave ship and the experiences of being in transit, on the auction block, and of life after sale facilitate an

untangling of the mystical rhetoric and the descriptions of the slave experience found in these Afro-women's texts.

Later in this chapter, I compare the literary descriptions of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's capture, departure, and venture in their slave societies in order to discern various points of anti-imperial enunciation. Through this comparison, I separate the religious rhetoric that replicates fixed Catholic imperial discourse from the anti-hegemonic discourse of denouncement of the injustice of suffering of the slave trade. In the following section, I outline the processes of enslavement and transport within Úrsula's and Rosa's New World slave societies and provide an overview of the compositions and social milieu of these slave societies.

Transport and Enslavement in the Slave Societies of Peru and Brazil

In the following section, I link individual slave experiences to the larger discourse of enslavement in the early modern Circum-Atlantic world by highlighting Úrsula's and Rosa's individual experiences within the broader context of the slave trade. Below, I plot the movements of enslaved persons and discuss how they fit into the realities of slave societies. Specifically, I describe Úrsula's and Rosa's individual slave experiences and compare them to historical descriptions of slave transport, slave movement and slave populations. These figures reveal the configurations of slave realities in New World urban settings. Cities were constructed on slave labor and this reliance and dependence upon slave labor is represented in Úrsula's and Rosa's textual productions.

It is significant to contextualize Úrsula's early experiences in Peru's slave society. Enslaved persons were trafficked in various ways and many were transported throughout Peru by ecclesiastical hands. Here, I posit Úrsula's origins in order to

highlight the disparate ways that individual slaves arrived in Lima. Úrsula's mother, Isabel de los Ríos, was about twenty when Úrsula was born in 1604 (van Deusen 3). Isabel was either transported as a young girl from an African coast slave port through Madrid prior to the turn of the century, was a child of African or Afro-descendant parents in the New World, or she accompanied her owner from Spain on the way to Lima. Isabel's owner, Jerónima de los Ríos, was married to Don Juan Manuel Anaya, the treasurer of the Royal Hacienda in Lima (Bromley 311). Records show that he brought five slaves with him from Seville in 1598 (Hernández 268). It is possible Úrsula's mother arrived from Africa by way of Seville, Spain.

Perhaps, Úrsula's mother may have been from Congo. Her document of sale to Maria de Aguilar, Jerónima's mother, refers to her as Isabel de Tierra Congo (van Deusen 62). Of note, the name Isabel de Tierra Congo appears in Cuenca, Ecuador in 1600. Isabel along with with her two mulatto children, seven year-old Ana and three year-old Miguel, were ceded to the chaplain of the convent of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Pedro Arias Dávila (Tardieu 290). The convent's Abbess, who participated in the local slave trade between Quito and Cuenca, sold them. Many slaves were sold and traded between clergy and their local community members. Between 1530 and 1560, slaves did not arrive in Lima via whole boatloads; rather, it was most common for slaves to arrive with their masters in small numbers, or with other Spaniards whose side business was supplying slaves to Lima (Lockhart 199, 200). The majority of black slaves in Peru changed hands through small direct transactions between merchants and prospective owners involving one or two slaves at a time. "Many other transactions were part of a constant, notably prevalent process of resale" (Lockhart 201). Thus, it is

possible that Isabel de Tierra Congo was sold and resold from owner to owner, perhaps remaining within a religious or clerical network of social relations. Perhaps Úrsula's mother had been in Peru for some time, which would have facilitated the development of her new hybrid Afro-Peruvian identity.

In 1614, when Úrsula was ten years old, Lima's population was 25,454. Of that, 10,386 people were Africans, with 744 categorized as mulattoes. "Thousands of African and Mulatto women [in Lima]. . . worked principally as slaves and servants" (Mills 186). In early seventeenth-century Lima there were 400 secular priests, and more when counting the Port of Callao (Mills 168). The Franciscan Creole Buenaventura de Salinas y Córdova (1592-1653) claimed that Lima's population was 40,000 by the year 1630 (Mills 166). Salinas writes that there were 1,366 nuns in Lima, mostly from wealthy families, and that they were served by 899 slaves. Salinas' contemporary account provides details about the Convent of Santa Clara -- Úrsula's convent -- recording that there were 197 nuns, including 20 novices, and 120 slaves (168).

What emerges from this historical context is a picture of a large religious network that demanded slave labor at almost a two-to-one slave to owner ratio. The significance of slave labor to this expansive infrastructure cannot be overestimated. The ways in which these African and Afro-descent slaves organized themselves within and without the walls of the various convents and monasteries constructed the religious and economic bedrock of early modern Lima. Within this context, it is significant that by the middle of the seventeenth-century, during Úrsula's life,

free and slave Africans and Afro-Americans were dominant and could exercise master status [as trade experts] without opposition. Thus of the 150 master tailors

in the city, 100 were blacks, mulattoes, or mestizos. Of the 70 master shoemakers of Lima in the same period, 40 were blacks and mulattoes (Klein 31).

About 40,000 Afro-Peruvians lived in Lima by 1640 (Klein 32). During Úrsula's lifetime, Lima was essentially half black. This urban setting was very similar to Rosa's setting in Brazil. By 1710, there were 20,000 whites and an equal number of blacks in Minas Gerais, and by 1717, that black population had increased to 33,000. In the 1720s, the black population surpassed 50,000 and by the time of Rosa's arrival to the region, in 1735, the first slave census suggests a figure of 100,000 blacks (Klein 68). These numbers suggest an almost complete economic dependence on slave labor in the early modern urban context of Minas Gerais.

The picture becomes clear. The daily realities for most early modern individuals, white and black, were depended upon slave labor and the slave experience was the norm for the majority of the urban population. Thus, daily life for most early modern individuals played out through various negotiations with African individuals. Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's textual productions highlight the dependence on slave labor and the hypocritical nature of various members of their religious communities. Thus, within the urban centers, individuals like Úrsula and Rosa developed economic, personal and religious relationships with numerous individuals from diverse circumstances, the majority of them black. These relationships solidified their own self-perceptions as well as contributed toward their respective transformations from slave to mystic. Specifically, both Úrsula and Rosa recognized the power of the religious space in the economic life of their respective urban centers, the settings for their religious performances. These women were far from isolated behind religious walls. Both Úrsula and Rosa, as part of

their religious communities' social networks, were linked to the circulating information and the developing ideologies that commingled in a space in which various white and black individuals exchanged information.

Social Milieu of Early Modern New World Urban Centers

The connections and exchanges between blacks from various backgrounds -- whether ethnic, religious, or occupational -- was undoubtedly an important reality for these disembedded African peoples: “[u]rban slaves mingled with an even greater number of free colored workers, providing unskilled and skilled services to the free populations” (Klein 102). By the seventeenth-century, Lima was “multiethnic and far from segregated” (Osorio 198). Diverse individuals moved about the city streets, in particular the *callejones*, or side streets and alleyways. The construction of ethnically segregated communities has been characterized as “shadows of the failed attempt by colonial authorities” to impose fixity and order (Osorio 199). While the motivation behind this attempt was the concretization of the imperial project to create a New “Peru” based on an “Old” Spain, the practice was that of social interconnectedness and the confluence of ideologies between peoples of various religious, ethnic and social distinctions. Importantly, the “lack of privacy in the *callejones*” in colonial Lima facilitated familiarity between various individuals and groups (Osorio 200).

In early modern Lima, much like in early modern Rio and Minas Gerais, various cultural ideologies converged. Individuals of disparate racial and social backgrounds came into contact and their practices changed in various directions revealing the “unsuspected processes of transculturation in seventeenth-century Lima” (Osorio 216). Additionally, women in this early modern urban space defied and ignored

established social roles to seek out more active solutions to quotidian problems. Their practices can be read as “complex combinations of ‘dominant’ and ‘subaltern’ elements, revealing that processes of transculturation were at work in colonial Peru” (Osorio 216). Thus, these women’s practices appear at once to be marginal and central and signify their hybrid identities as they negotiated between their disparate subject positions.

Úrsula’s early modern Lima was a complex and multicultural urban environment. This multicultural urban setting somewhat ameliorated her hard life. As van Deusen points out, Úrsula had an affinity for frippery: Úrsula classified herself as vain and frivolous, writing, “In the past, I went to the visitors’ parlor beautifully adorned from head to toes” (van Deusen 27). While van Deusen conjectures that Úrsula got her beautiful adornments from her owner or from other religious community members, it is most likely that she purchased these goods from other slaves and free merchants who composed the “Black” market of Limeña economy. Úrsula probably purchased her frocks from the network of these free black and mulatto merchants, and as an added bonus received all the city’s gossip and related tales that most likely evidenced the transculturated practices of the multiethnic early modern Spanish American city.

Recent diaspora studies focus on intercultural religious exchanges and the lived experiences of Africans in the Americas (van Deusen 138). For example, Christianity should not be conceived of as a “superficial veil” when discussing Central African groups, like the Congo-Angola peoples. According to van Deusen, the “ever-evolving, interpenetrating and culturally layered” processes of cultural contact between European and African paradigms foster new ways of considering identity construction in the New

World matrix: “Christianity was a deeply lived experience, both in the world and in the cloister” (van Deusen 139).

With regard to my study, it is imperative to understand that the individual slave experiences of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa were embedded in the social stratification that typified their daily life in their religious communities. Religious women’s rankings and divisions of labor and duties within the walls of their convents and *recogimientos* -- lay religious houses -- were rigid and well demarcated. All three of these Afro-women participated and lived within the religious communities confined within these stonewalled structures. The conventual lifestyle was a microcosm of the larger social stratification of early modern Circum-Atlantic intercultural: various labors and duties were divided based on status and classification as white veiled, black veiled, novice, *donada* (servant given to Christ), *criada* (servant to other women), *lega* (lay religious), or slave. Within each of these designations, women were also ranked based on their *casta*, a proto-racial designation. Specific kinds of tasks marked women socially and functioned as designations allowing them to construct meaning about their own status and the status of others. Women in these religious houses and convents -- specifically, *donadas* like Úrsula -- functioned as a “buffer between nuns and the hundreds of servants and slaves who inhabited the cloisters” (van Deusen 152).

The slave societies of New World urban centers like Lima and Rio were composed of a majority of African and Afro-descendant individuals. Many of these individuals were slaves, but many were free laborers, tradespersons and artisans. Religious communities were replicas of their societies and a rigid system of social stratification was the manifestation of the imperial project to create a New World

based on an Old World ordering. These religious spaces were the settings for Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's performances as mystics and their transformations from slave subject to mystic agent. Their new identities were linked to the realities of their urban communities and their social networks that were composed of numerous and disparate African and Afro-descendant people.

Enslavement and Pan-Yorùbá Identities

Cultural contact between diverse African groups and, specifically, contact with slave traders of the Oyo Empire allowed for the conflation of cosmological ideas and religious practice. This section constructs a basis for my discussions in chapters three, four and five about the syncretic Afro-Catholic interpretations of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's visions. I do not analyze these hybrid Afro-Catholic visions in this chapter; however, I provide an overview of the ways in which individuals from various places in Africa were in contact prior to, during and after enslavement and transatlantic transport. Therefore, I suggest that Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's Afro-practice may be understood to contain elements of what is contemporarily referred to as Yorùbá religious practice, or more aptly a Pan-Yorùbá cosmology. I use the term Pan-Yorùbá to refer to various African individuals who organized their cosmological precepts and religious practice under a broad umbrella of transculturated religious practice. I suggest that various individuals from diverse geographical regions in Africa, like Guinea, Senegambia, Congo and Angola, are linked by a shared intellectual identity as peoples transculturated with Pan-Yorùbá cosmological concepts:

The individual could claim to be part of the larger Yorùbá collective when that identity claims a set of advantages . . . in that collective sense, myths of origins

can be shared, references to Oduduwa can be made, and events that led to group memory can be emphasized (Falola, *African Diaspora* 125).

Diverse individuals from disparate geographical regions came into contact with these Pan-Yorùbá peoples, individuals who formed religious branches of the shared trunk of religious practitioners citing Oduduwa as progenitor and who vied for political control of an expansive region in West Africa (Law, *Oyo Empire* 123). Various city-states functioned in a confederacy and contested the right-to-rule of the Oyo Empire for centuries during the transatlantic slave trade (Falola, *Yorùbá Gurus* 2). The transatlantic slave trade increased the demand for slaves; thus, many of these city-states, or kingdoms, engaged in conflict, jockeying for political power and securing economic power by acquiring slaves in war and as part of their trade with various other regions.

Importantly, the discussion about slave ethnicities or *nações*, as I discuss below, needs to be refocused. As Philip D. Morgan points out, scholars need to resist emphasizing African cultural unity, and the “non-random” nature of the slave trade. This has a homogenizing effect on understanding the complexities and the heterogeneity that characterizes the Atlantic slave trade (142). To cite Úrsula’s personal story, whether her mother was from the Congo or not, may not have been the most important factor with regards to her religious practice. Úrsula’s mother, as well as Úrsula herself, lived, worked and worship in contact with many other enslaved persons whose lives were altered by contact with various African peoples prior to and after transatlantic transport. With regards to contact between enslaved African peoples, “the real issue is the complexity of networks deep within Africa that funnelled slaves into nodal points on the coast” (Morgan 132).

In the following section, I discuss the ways in which the Oyo traders participated in the Atlantic slave trade. However, I treat this example of Oyo participation in the internal African slave trade as a representative of how many African peoples were brought into contact with Pan-Yorùbá ideologies. Significantly, these traders may have tapped into larger trade networks with West-Central Africa. “The sequence of multiple sales that attended transfers of slaves between their place of seizure and the coast could divert the flow in almost any direction. As slaves plodded westward, many died and others were added, so that by the time they reached the coast the caravans were indeed a motley crew” (Morgan 132). Similarly, I suggest that many individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds came into contact with these Pan-Yorùbá traders.

Here, I posit a way to think about African groups in contact in Africa prior to European inclusion with the internal African slave trade. It is not within the scope of this chapter to circumscribe the movements and circulations of African peoples within and along the West African Coast during the Transatlantic slave trade. Yet, it is important to highlight the ways in which some enslaved peoples were moved from the interior, such as from the Congo and Angola regions, to the coastline and then were moved north during the slave ship’s process of securing provisions for transatlantic voyages (Morgan 131). I am not collapsing all African ethnic groups into one religious category, but I am suggesting that we should reconsider the level of transculturated religious practices among the various African ethnic groups based on the ways these disparate peoples came into contact in Africa prior to, during and after enslavement. Thus, when we consider the provenances of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa, we must take into consideration

the high degree of transculturation that typified individuals from Guinea, Mina or Congo sold as slaves to Old and New Worlds.

Yorùbá: Ethnic, Political and Religious Significations

The term Yorùbá implies various meanings. In part, it describes peoples concentrated near present day Bight of Benin and Nigeria and dispersed to various parts in the New World. Large numbers of Yorùbá were transported to Brazil in the nineteenth century as a result of the collapse of the Oyo Empire (Law, *Oyo Empire* 278). Moreover, there is some evidence of Lucumí (Yorùbá) peoples in seventeenth-century Peru and hard evidence of Yorùbá slaves passing through Slave Coast outlets before 1660 and after 1713 (Eltis 253). In addition to the ethnic meaning of Yorùbá, the term also carries political and religious significance.

The terms Lucumí in Spanish America and Nago in Brazil refer to the Yorùbá people and include those from the Oyo, Ife and perhaps Ijebu geopolitical groupings (Lovejoy 41). While the Yorùbá were never a solidified geopolitical nation or kingdom, nor did they function as a cohesive ethnic group in the early modern period, the term gains cohesion as a moniker of identity referring to a people with a common cosmology, religious practice and identity in diaspora (Falola, *African Diaspora* 125). Importantly, numerous individuals from Yorùbáland, the larger territory that encompassed the Oyo-empire, emanated from Slave Coast ports of embarkation, like Whydah, in the latter part of the transatlantic slave trade. These Yorùbá individuals were in contact with many other peoples as part of political reshuffling: “The collapse of Oyo in the Old World triggered widespread flight and migration and threw fragments of many different Yorùbá-speaking groups together in environments that included many non-Yorùbá speakers”

(Eltis 17, 18). A large percentage of enslaved persons are associated directly and indirectly with the Oyo Empire because not only was the kingdom a source of enslaved Yorùbá but it was responsible for the transit trade of slaves that subsequently acculturated into Yorùbá norms (Lovejoy 42).

Long before their forced transport to Old and New World ports in the Circum-Atlantic during the transatlantic slave trade, Yorùbá peoples' daily lives were demarcated by transculturated practice. Yorùbá has been used to describe people speaking a common language from the interior of the Bight of Benin since at least the sixteenth century, but the term is not limited to a geographic region: rather, it refers to people not only from the Oyo Empire but other peoples, like the Hausa, as well (Lovejoy 41). This section links various peoples like the Hausa, to the Oyo Empire. I suggest that the Oyo Empire can be understood as a hub for the distribution and transportation of various African peoples, those situated to the north like the Hausa, extending as far as Guinea and Senegambia, as well as perhaps peoples to the south, like individuals from Angola and even Congo. I am not suggesting that these peoples shared a common political or ethnic organization. However, many diverse peoples came into contact with the Oyo Empire through conflict, war and trade (Johnson 62). A more detailed account of the movement of Congo and Angola enslaved persons moving north during this process of slave trafficking is not within the scope of this chapter, however, it was common practice for slave ships to sail the coast to provision the ship before departing for its transatlantic destination. Here, I am suggesting ways to think about movements of peoples and ideologies within the Circum-Atlantic and the ways this contact may account for the possibility of transculturated religious practice between these disparate ethnic groups.

Ethnic terms like Mina or Guinea are incomplete at best and merely offer a partial understanding about an individual's provenance. These terms mostly suggest the geographic starting point for the African person's entry into the European record rather than their connections within their disparate West African cultures. The Oyo-Empire, which formed part of Yorùbáland, is located centrally between northern Guinea regions and southern Congo-Angola regions along the West African coast. Tracing the geographic origins of peoples in Africa provides a limited understanding of these diverse peoples identities and commonalities based on contact with other African individuals in a milieu of transculturated cosmological practice.

In the following section, I participate in the debate about the complicated and often misleading notions of West African identities based on points of embarkation from the various coastlines of Western Africa. I use descriptions of Chicaba's, Rosa's and Úrsula's origins as a springboard for this discussion and highlight the importance of the Oyo Empire as the hub of internal West African slave trade and contact with European slavers. I discuss the conflicts between the city-states, or kingdoms, of Whydah and Alladah to show the ways in which slaves were captured and transported in Africa and to highlight the confluence and movement of peoples and ideologies in Africa prior to their internal transport and their process of enslavement out of Africa. While investigations about the diversity of ethnic groups and African peoples circulating in and out of Africa has dispelled the "monolithic" conception of African peoples it may also hinder a view of the confluence and movements of peoples and ideologies that typified the Circum-Atlantic intercultural. The following section describes the disparate understandings of various African peoples so as to highlight how they may be connected religiously.

Guinea, Mina, Congo-Angola or Oyo-Yorùbá

At the time when Úrsula's mother was most likely trafficked to Lima, the majority of slaves to reach Spanish America in the sixteenth century "came from the West African coast and specifically the section between the Senegal and Niger rivers known as the Ríos de Guinea" (Bowser 37) to work as domestic servants in urban settings, like Lima. The Spanish Crown encouraged sales from this region, taking a fourth of the sale price for slaves from this region, which was more than in other regions and "in 1635 an attempt was made to route all slaves from this region to Spanish America" (Bowser 37). Additionally, to meet the diverse demands for diverse labor in and around early modern Lima, mining slaves were brought in from Congo and Angola (Klein 29). Perhaps Úrsula's mother, Isabel de los Ríos, who may have also been known as Isabel de Tierra Congo, was from Congo-Angola region (van Deusen 62). Many slaves from diverse regions such as like Senegambia, Guinea, the Congo and Angola were being imported in great number after internal movement and transportation to different trading ports along the West African coast during the provisioning process.

Importantly, with respect to Úrsula's origins, the Spanish depended on the Portuguese for most of the sixteenth century for their supply of slaves. However, 1580, the Spanish crown sold contracts known as *avenças* to various European slave ships (Bowser 30). Úrsula's mother may have been purchased by any of these vessels and transported to the New World. Importantly, this would have merely been another part of the long process of movement towards America. To secure fresh water and other provisions for transatlantic transport, ships carrying slave from southern areas like the Congo and Angola, would occasionally travel north to ports where fresh supplies were

more accessible (Miller 16). This highlights the diverse movements of peoples in Africa along the coastline and its connection to internal movements.

Diverse statistics for records of ship manifests and estimations for the numbers of different African “nations” provide a convoluted image of the movement of these peoples in Africa prior to the European entrance in the transatlantic slave trade. Terms like Guinea, or Mina, and perhaps Congo-Angola, are at best assumptions about ethnic identity and are better used to understand European ways of categorizing individuals or the ways Afro and Afro-descendant peoples chose to realign their identities as part of the process of ethnogenesis, or new identity construction in the New World. Furthermore, diverse individuals were ambiguously labeled based on point of embarkation. Peoples reaching these ports had already been exposed to transculturated Afro-religious practice, like Yorùbá ideologies, prior to, during and after enslavement as captured and trafficked individuals in the Oyo-Empire, or other traffickers that may have worked with other African internal traders that formed part of the Oyo-Empire.

The Oyo Empire was expansive. Its trade reached many regions in Western Africa and had contact with many other African nations (French 38). This contact resulted in a diffusion of Pan-Yorùbá cultural practice. For example, the Pan-Yorùbá cosmological practice of mounting is the ritual that facilitates direct communication with the Godhead. This Pan-Yorùbá practice incorporates the important imagery of the Oyo cavalry. The Oyo people were great horsemen in the sixteenth century and many of their religious beliefs can be explained in part by this history (Smith 48). It is likely that they obtained horses through trade with the north, exchanging slaves for horses (Law, *Oyo Empire* 217). In the eighteenth century the Oyo empire was importing Hausa slaves from

the north for their own domestic use and to meet the European demand for slaves in the Atlantic Basin (Law, *Oyo Empire* 217). Diverse peoples from these vast regions reached the Old and New Worlds via contact with Pan-Yorùbá groups, thus individuals were exposed to transculturated religious imagery.

Pan-Yorùbá individuals shared a common religious viewpoint that revolved around the importance of divine revelation and ancestor spirit worship and possession. These cosmologies, as well as their propensity to conflate with Christian practice in Africa, are well documented (Thornton 252). However, the term Yorùbá itself does not come to bear this syncretic religious meaning until the nineteenth century because its complete significance emerged mostly from academic pursuits based on the post-eighteenth century documentation of the oral histories of Yorùbá peoples in diaspora. However, we can use the Yorùbá, and specifically, the conflated cosmological concepts of peoples trafficked by the Oyo Empire, to outline Afro-Catholic practice in Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's mystical visions.

In my detailed chapters, I analyze their visions for cosmological influences as people transculturated with this Pan-Yorùbá identity. To preface these later discussions, the following section considers the debate about various African ethnicities in the Old and New World slave societies with the goal of illustrating how the term Yorùbá, or Pan-Yorùbá, can be applied to understanding a shared cosmology even if it did not include a shared ethnicity, polity or language. In sum, many slaves arriving in New World urban centers, like Lima and Rio, were from diverse areas of Western Africa, including other areas like Congo-Angola and Guinea. I offer that the Oyo Empire was one of the main traffickers in internal African slavery and enslaved persons passed through the hands of

these Oyo middlemen to reach European vessels that transported this human cargo to Old and New World slave societies (Clarke 87). Furthermore, these traders were part of vast internal networks of other African traders. I suggest that terms Guinea, Mina or even Congo-Angola used to classify individuals in diaspora limit the understanding of peoples who shared a Pan-Yorùbá cosmology.

Mistaken Identities: Guinea and Mina Origins, Oyo-Yorùbá Invocations

Father Juan Carlos Paniagua records that it was a Spanish slave ship that carried Chicaba out of Guinea, stopping at the port of Santo Tomé to “[p]rove[er] la nave de lo necesario para el viaje” before proceeding to Seville (Paniagua 53). Santo Tomé shipped Africans collected on the coasts nearby the Bight of Benin and Biafra (Hall 71) and was a barracoon for slaves waiting for transport to other destinations north (Miller 81). During the later half of the seventeenth century, it is most probable that Chicaba was captured from the Slave Coast, closer to Whydah or Benin. Moreover, even if we accept the hagiographic narrative as fact, in the area of the Gold Coast and Guinea, gold was no longer the primary export. African individuals engaged in increased warfare with other Africans to procure slaves and meet European demands (Thomas 295).

Additionally, we can suspect Paniagua’s assertion that Chicaba was from Guinea. Of note, the name “Guinea” appears to be a corruption of “Jenné” (Djenné), a trading town on the river Bani, a tributary of the Upper Niger (Thomas 54). The Upper Niger river bordered the Oyo kingdom during the time of Chicaba’s capture. It is plausible to assume that many of the individuals identified as Guineans in ship manifests may have been part of the internal slave trade of those involucrated with the Oyo Empire. Thus, I believe the term Guinea, used by Paniagua to describe Chicaba’s

provenance, is imprecise and represents a territory too broad to specify Chicaba's origins. Moreover, "la Mina Baja del Oro" is also not specific enough (Paniagua 31). While Sue Houchins and Baltasar Fra-Molinero offer that the *Mina Baja del Oro* corresponds to the coastal area east of Elmina Castle, citing the Portuguese use of *La Mina del Oro* since 1482, this classification may also be too broad (215).

The ambiguous and ubiquitous ethnic identities of slaves from regions like Guinea and Mina makes a convincing case for understanding the term "mina" as ethnic moniker rather than provenance (Hall 80). The terms Guinea and Mina more likely represent the ethnic and political identity seen in contrast to their captors and traders than their points of embarkation. The task of uncomplicating the complicated term *Mina* reveals it to be a vague and inadequate descriptor. To further complicate the use of this term, the great majority of slaves often labeled as "Minas" were "evidently of the Yorùbá linguistic group" and were defined as Nagos and Jeges in Brazil (Boxer 176). At best what emerges is polysemic understanding of the terms Guinea and Mina.

In some cases these descriptors pointed to the geographic points of embarkation in Africa and in other cases they referred to a person's ethnicity or political ties. However, when we consider the vast amount of time an African individual from any part of Western Africa enmeshed in the transatlantic trade spends knowing that she may be captured as part of internal conflicts, the time she spends in transit to trade ports, the time in transatlantic transit and then time re-aligning and relating with other enslaved persons either in transit or upon arrival in the new slave society, we can begin to glimpse the process of transculturation at work during the contact between diverse African groups, and how terms like Guinea or Mina, or even Congo might reveal more about ethnic

identities forged as part of the enslavement process and the diaspora. Thus, this terminology is ambiguous at best in suggesting any particular cosmology. However, it is clear that whether one accepts these terms to describe ethnic identity or provenance, these peoples were in contact with many other individuals during enslavement and, moreover, there is a high probability that they encountered individuals from the Oyo Empire.

The complex process of transculturation typifies Chicaba's entrance into the slave trade that most likely brought her into contact with Pan-Yorùbá peoples of the Oyo kingdom. Rosa, like Chicaba and countless other enslaved African peoples, was subject to internal movements and conflicts as the demand for slaves rose over the course of the early modern period. In her Inquisition trial of 1763 (process 9065 fl2), Rosa is classified as a "natural da costa de feydá": "Rosa era uma negrinha nascida na Costa de Mina, de nação courana, também conhecida como Coura, que desembarcou de um navio negreiro no Rio de Janeiro, em 1725" (Mott 1). Rosa probably inhabited the periphery of the "lagoa de Curamo" near the actual city of Lagos and was captured during one of the battles between the neighboring kingdoms before being dispatched to the port of Judá, modern day Whydah, and transported to Brazil (Verger, cited in Mott 2). Perhaps, Rosa was sold into slavery by other Africans, specifically, powerful authoritative Africans. If she were aware of her subject-position at the age of six, she most likely would not have associated her value in terms of inferiority of class or *casta*, but understood her subjugated position merely as an economic reality. In the following section, I illustrate the power negotiated between two rival Pan-Yorùbá kingdoms, Whydah and Alladah, in the Oyo Empire. This conflict highlights the control Pan-Yorùbá kingdoms had in the

transatlantic slave trade and their social and religious influence exerted over the disparate individuals who passed through their hands on their way to European slave societies.

The Slave Ports of Whydah and Allada: African Middlemen Merchants

The constant jockeying for political power between Pan-Yorùbá peoples, as in the example of the conflict between the Oyo Kingdoms of Whydah and Allada, created an atmosphere of fear and instability. These conflicts resulted in the capture and sale of prisoners of war sold as slaves to the Europeans. For example, beginning in 1724 and culminating in 1727, the Kingdom of Whydah was controlled and conquered by the Kingdom of Dahomey. Between the time of Rosa's birth circa 1719 and when she was loaded onto the slave ship off the port of Whydah circa 1725, Rosa's life was in constant flux. Internal tensions and political shifts typified this time period in the history of Whydah, and most likely Rosa was a prisoner of war during one of the many battles that constituted this period of political rivalry between Whydah and Allada (Kelly 163).

The power and influence of the ruling elite in Whydah was clearly in the hands of the Africans. They maintained the upper hand with regards to their dealings with European slavers. Archaeological evidence suggests that the ruling classes in Whydah used their material culture to communicate their power when dealing with Europeans, such as Portuguese slave traders (163). Specifically, "this represents [Whydah] efforts to negotiate the complexity of the European presence by symbolically associating the Europeans (or more likely their trade and wealth potential) with the [Whydah] elite" (163). The Europeans that lived and traded in Whydah were clearly aware that they were not the authority makers. The Portuguese understood that the "[Whydah] . . . possessed this power and authority" (170). Furthermore, "strict supervision by Africans as

exhibited by [Whydah] . . . [was] more the ‘norm’ than the position of greater European power seen at Elmina” (170). Slaves were transported from the interior and used within the Oyo slave economy as well as trafficked to Europeans: “. . . the trade in slaves purchased from the interior for re-sale to the Europeans, which made up the greater part of the Whydah trade, seems also to have been open to all” (Law, *Common People* 211). The merchant class in Whydah functioned as “middlemen”; these middlemen wielded buying power amongst the local elite. “Chiefs” that rose to power and influence in Whydah society did so by relying on their own skills and economic power. These positions were “conferred on the basis of relevant commercial and linguistic skills rather than of hereditary nobility, and thus provided an avenue of social mobility for people outside the existing hereditary aristocracy” (Law, *Common People* 212). Whydah was one of the greatest transit ports of the Slave Coast. Most likely it was etched into the imaginaries of the networks of peoples who lived and toiled during these times (such as Rosa’s parents), as a space, or rather non-space, of impermanence. The constant shifting and shipping of peoples created powerful images: the image of economic value of the slave as a commodity and the power of the African middlemen merchants to control the lives of peoples captured, enslaved and transported within and without of West Africa.

Afro-Catholicism on Both Sides of the Atlantic

While Rosa was only a child, as was Chicaba, when they were captured off the African Slave Coast, these girls’ formative years were spent in cultures already deep in the processes of transculturation. Yorùbá symbolism and cosmology was transforming through exposure and contact to Christian ideologies just as Catholic catechisms were transforming to meet the demands of movements of great many peoples into and through

the transatlantic slave trade (Thornton, *Trail of Voodoo* 267). Rosa was indoctrinated in a region in West Africa that may have already had a Catholic influence. Moreover, this political region had religious links to Yorùbá people, and thus, Rosa may have been exposed to their specific religious cosmology before being boarded onto the slave ship. Furthermore, in this African transitory space, there may have already been a foundation for the tension between the Catholic faith and the religions of the peoples surrounding Whydah. From 1719-1724, at the Portuguese fortress of Whydah, prior to embarkation slaves were subjected to Christian indoctrination:

[T]he growth of Portuguese/Brazilian interest in the Whydah trade had culminated in the establishment of a Portuguese fortified trading post in the kingdom in 1721. The viceroy of Brazil insisted that the new fortress should be provided with a chaplain, and in 1724 an Italian Capuchin from Bahia was recruited for the post (Law, *Slave Coast* 58).

It is important to understand the connections between these polities and the circulations of peoples and ideologies. Moreover, it illustrates the degree of syncretism and transculturation already in practice in Africa during the movements of peoples from the interior of West Central Africa like the Congo to the coastline prior to transatlantic transport. Christianity albeit heterodox variations of it, have a history in Central Africa, like the Congo (Morgan 132). Christian cosmological precepts also circulated outside of the Congo interior: “in the early 1680s Abangala and some of his chiefs agreed to be baptized as Christians, but were obliged to abandon this intention through the opposition of the priesthood of the indigenous cults” (Law, *Common People* 215). It is quite possible, that even as young girls both Chicaba and Rosa may have come into contact

with forms of Christian ideology. Christian ideologies had been introduced, and to some extent, internalized by the early seventeenth century:

Christianity had been regarded in Allada as something to be added to, rather than substituted for, indigenous cults and customs, and that people had been willing to adopt Christianity only provided that this did not involve giving up their established local practices (Law, *Slave Coast* 45).

Rosa may have entered the transatlantic slave trade as a result of internal Pan-Yorùbá conflict. Chicaba and Rosa may have embarked from the Slave Coast, specifically in the ports of Bight of Benin or Whydah. Úrsula's mother may have come from the Congo and most likely during her movement to the coastline she came into contact with other slaves and slave traffickers who subscribed to transculturated religious practice. Importantly, the peoples coming from the Slave Coast and the Congo had already been exposed to African variants of Christianity prior to their transatlantic transport. Additionally, we must consider classifications like Guinea and Mina, the terms that overtly describe Chicaba and Rosa's provenance, which are partial at best and better when limited to the discussion of geopolitical place of entry into the European record.

African peoples involved in the internal African slave system lived in contact zones. In these zones, these various African peoples were transculturated and transported out of Africa and into Circum-Atlantic cities like Seville, Lima and Rio de Janeiro. Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's slave experiences are linked to other Pan-Yorùbá peoples and their cosmologies. Their new identity construction within the Catholic space in their Iberian and Ibero-american slave societies should be understood as linked to the transculturated, hybrid identities of other Africans in their communities. As

I discuss in the following chapters, in these places, enslaved peoples met Afro-Catholic individuals already engaged in and practicing a form of syncretized belief systems. While Chicaba and Rosa may have been predisposed to a type of African Christianity prior to their enslavement, a Christianity that incorporated and did not negate specific Yorùbá practices, like Úrsula, they were absorbed into diverse and religiously heterodox societies. In the case of Chicaba and Rosa, regardless of their complete grasp of any Yorùbá African religious cosmology, their worldview was substantially altered as a result of their exploitation and deprivation during the Middle Passage and their slave experiences in the Circum-Atlantic interculture.

Textual Analysis: Capture, Departure, and Venture

In the following sections, I demonstrate how my theoretical and methodological framework functions by providing a preliminary portrait of each woman with respect to her hybrid subject position. I highlight certain portions of these women's words that link their personal experiences to the broader discourse of slavery during the early modern period so as to uncover their connected histories as commodities and suffering enslaved persons moving within the Circum Atlantic-interculture. If my narrative begins with the Atlantic slave trade, this space is just one link in the chain of movement these women experienced early in their lives. Many African peoples arrived to the coast and embarkation points in disparate ways, as prisoners of war and victims of internal African conflicts. Thus, it is highly likely that both Chicaba and Rosa, and Úrsula's mother, found their way to the slave ship as part of the internal African slave trade (Thornton, Law).

Úrsula's story

At the turn of the seventeenth century Isabel de los Ríos, a black criolla slave, gave birth to a little girl who would be called Úrsula. Living in colonial Lima, Peru, in the household of Jerónima de los Ríos, Úrsula's first steps started her on the path of a hard life of labor and servitude. From the los Ríos household, a seven year-old Úrsula moved to the household of the renowned Limeña mystic, Luisa Melgarejo Soto, for whom she would labor (Portal 154). In this household, Úrsula endured the hardship of a slave but also learned about Luisa's mystic practices (Martinez 213). In 1617, at the age of twelve, Úrsula entered the convent as a slave, working for Inés del Pulgar (van Deusen, *Souls* 3). Úrsula lived out her life of service and toil inside the hard stonewalls of the convent. While she suffered as a slave to the nuns, later as a *donada*--one who dedicates her life to religious service--she also constructed her mystic life as a religious intercessor. Building her life on the Rock, a reference she herself would make (*King James Version*, 1 Corinthians 10.4), she transformed her slave experience and became famous within the walls of her religious community in the Convent of Santa Clara.

Úrsula's spiritual journal attests to her slave experience and reveals her Afro-voice in the early modern setting of the urban African diaspora center of early modern Lima, Peru. The genre of the spiritual journal did not require the writer to judge and justify herself and her history (McKnight 168). In this spiritual journal, Úrsula conveys her slave experiences through Catholic rhetoric and convention. My close reading highlights Úrsula's voice. Her voice articulates her internalization of the slave experience in the convent and the ways she identifies with Christ's suffering. This

reading highlights how Úrsula distinguishes between Christ's choice to suffer and the suffering He experienced at the hands of others. This differentiation facilitates a reading where Úrsula denounces slave suffering as an anti-Christian practice.

The following passage describes aspects of the slave experience, as Úrsula understands them. Her description is couched in religious rhetoric and, in the tradition of female religious writing; Úrsula invokes the convention of a dialogue with God/Christ as a vehicle for her message. Perhaps Úrsula, knowing her confessor would read her journal, uses this convention to teach her reader about her exploited position as a laboring slave in the convent. The dialogue as a convention is traditionally and classically understood as didactic (Baldick 89). Úrsula reveals aspects of Christ's physical suffering and implicitly compares and relates them to her own. In chapter three, I discuss *imitatio christi*, the individualized Catholic religious practice of fusing oneself to Christ. Úrsula writes from the position of a religious devotee linked to Christ. Thus, much of her dialogue with Christ can be read as her own monologue about her slave experience. Úrsula uses Christ as a vehicle for her own pain. She describes what He endured, both as a result of His own choices and as a result of the choices of others. The way in which she describes Christ's suffering and the way in which she re-articulates His voice may be read as her description of what she endured as a suffering slave and servant. At the end of the following passage she gives voice to an Angolan slave. The slave's words uncover Úrsula's critique, giving voice to the slave experience in her early modern Peruvian Catholic community.

When I asked the Lord if it was His will that they should make amends when they started, He answered by asking whether His apostles had made little effort to

reach heaven. *I fell seven times while carrying the cross. I spent forty days and nights in the desert fasting. Throughout my life, I never rested. Have you not heard them say, "The labors of Christ?" Those who are dedicated to me, what work do they have? It is well known that Lent is dedicated to me, so they can contemplate my suffering.* I said, "Lord why do some find it so repugnant?" He said, *Because they are the daughters of Adam.* During the canonical hours, they went to the choir to chatter, as though the day does not have twelve hours, and because they were lazy and inconsiderate. *Had Judas not thought he would make a profit from that money, he would not have sold me. If he had then considered that I was God and asked for my forgiveness, I would not have taken that into account. That is what they do here. Praying and sincerely reflecting on one's sins is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the entire Most Holy Trinity knows what those sins are. What were they doubting? Were they doubting the three little times each year? What about those? They did not have to be satisfied with nine days, but they were, with what they did during those nine days. Christ's Majesty endured it all with tremendous struggle, even when they dragged Him with the cross.* He said, *Have you not seen when they drag a dead animal by a rope? Well, they dragged me the same way because my human strength had failed me. They made me fall by pulling the rope, giving me blows, shoving and beating me with clubs.* It seemed to me that the question had been insulting and I asked Him to forgive me. Because they had begged me, I had done it. He said, *As you are with a lord and a father, always be humble and obedient. As long as you obey my commandments, all is well, and you have nothing to fear.* Later He

appeared as a shepherd, with His sheep on His shoulders. He taught me so much I cannot comprehend it all. He said He had been a shepherd in the world and was even one now. He was always tending and caring for His flock. I said, “Lord, why is it that when I see you, I cannot see those two people who accompany you? *You see me as I was when I was made flesh in the world, but you will not seem me as I was when I rose to heaven. Those who live in the world do not see God unless they are totally dead to the things of the world. They go to pray willingly and then know I am worthy of all praise. The Holy Spirit confirms them in its grace.* I said, “The Holy Spirit? How?” *No, it is the Most Holy Trinity. Yes, the Father is the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is all one essence and Three Persons. If they find prayer difficult, they should persevere before me, thinking of their sins and asking forgiveness. This is penance.* I said, “Prayer is penance? He said, *One Hail Mary said with conviction is penance.* I said, “Lord I do not dare ask you to confirm me in this grace.” He said, *Strive now and follow my will in everything. Have you not heard the Angolan slave say, “My owner orders it”? Do everything in the same way: with the desire to follow my will* (van Deusen 137, 138).

Úrsula begins the journal entry: “When I asked the Lord if it was His will that they should make amends when they started, He answered by asking whether His apostles had made little effort to reach Heaven”. Initially, the “they” to which Úrsula refers is unclear. Christ’s rhetorical response to Úrsula’s question approaches the discourse of the role of work in salvation: Christ’s question affirms the role of work in the disciples’ attainment of paradise. Was it as a result of their work or His work? The

affirmation that the disciples “had made little effort [habian trabajado poco]” underscores their lack of work when contrasted to the description of His work in the following line. In an italicized response, Úrsula answers rearticulating God/Christ's position:

I fell seven times while carrying the cross. I spent forty days and nights in the desert fasting. Throughout my life, I never rested. Have you not heard them say, ‘The labors of Christ?’ Those who are dedicated to me, what work do they have? It is well known that Lent is dedicated to me, so they can contemplate my suffering’.

Again, Úrsula’s rearticulation of Christ’s rhetorical question and the repetition of the active first person voice, “*I fell . . . , I spent . . . , I never rested . . .*,” emphasizes Christ’s role as laborer and sufferer. In this case, the disciples, or any believer for that matter, are passively saved through His works. Úrsula’s response affirms her position that through Christ’s labors and His works believers are saved. But she also critiques the work of believers, suggesting that the contemplation of His suffering during Lent is not quite the same as His legitimate work.

Here, Úrsula’s use of the first person functions in at least two ways: first she highlights what she sees to be the essential nature of Christ, his suffering of physical pain, his deprivation of food and shelter, his laboring and tireless existence; and second, the deployment of the first person voice reveals Úrsula’s perception of her conflation with Christ. Through her practice of *imitatio christi*, Úrsula has fused herself to Him. The ambiguous “they” from the beginning of the passage comes into focus. Perhaps, the “they” from the first line refers to “those dedicated to Christ” in the subsequent line. These lines read in juxtaposition highlight the passive nature of Christ’s

believers versus the active nature of Christ himself. Moreover, Christ's response may be read as a stand-in for Úrsula's response. The "they" may refer to the slave-holding nuns in the convent: those who contemplate His suffering but who do not toil or suffer the way He suffered. Because Úrsula perceives herself to be linked to Christ, she understands her active role as sufferer and laborer -- a role superior to passive believers who are merely dedicated to contemplating suffering.

In the next line, Úrsula's voice responds to Christ: "I said, 'Lord why do some find it so repugnant?'" Here, Úrsula refers to work and suffering and she creates two categories, Christians that suffer and work and pseudo-Christians that are anti-suffering and anti-work. Úrsula writes Christ's response: "He said, *Because they are the daughters of Adam*". This answer shields Úrsula from reprisal. Christ has accused the women of Úrsula's convent of laziness, not Úrsula herself. The reader understands that it is these other women, not Úrsula, who find work repugnant. Here, Úrsula critiques this lazy attitude as un-Christlike. In the next line, Úrsula elaborates upon her description of the lazy nuns: "During the canonical hours, they went to the choir to chatter, as though the day does not have twelve hours, and because they were lazy and inconsiderate". This line highlights Úrsula's belief in the Christian value of a full day's work. In underscoring the behavior of the lazy and gossipy nuns, Úrsula contrasts Christ's laboring body with the idle bodies of the nuns. This passage begins to distinguish between Úrsula's perception of herself as linked to Christ and her perception of others. Úrsula's slave experience, her corporeal identity as a laboring and suffering body and her Christlike work ethic contrasts to the nuns' experience where work is repugnant and religious bodies are passive and idle.

The next lines in Úrsula's journal signal Christ's response: "*Had Judas not thought he would make a profit from that money, he would not have sold me. If he had then considered that I was God and asked for my forgiveness, I would not have taken that into account. That is what they do here.*" This portion of Christ's response signals the difference between the sufferings Christ endured because of His own choice and the suffering Christ endured at Judas's hands. Judas had his own agenda and his own plot -- plot motivated by economic gain. Úrsula contrasts Christ's suffering from Judas' desire for economic gain -- thirty pieces of silver -- to the kind of suffering Christ chooses freely in the previous lines. Úrsula highlights her value of repentance. In suggesting that if Judas were to have recognized the truth -- Jesus' divinity -- and were to have asked for forgiveness, He would have taken that into consideration in forgiving Judas. In a parallel manner, if the nuns of Úrsula's community were to recognize their anti-Christian exploitation of Úrsula's body for their own economic gain, then they too might be forgiven. This may be read as Úrsula's couched denouncement of those participants in the transatlantic slave trade.

In the next line, Úrsula continues her critique using Christ's voice as the vehicle for her critique of the anti-Christian slave society:

Praying and sincerely reflecting on one's sins is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the entire Most Holy Trinity knows what those sins are . . . Christ's Majesty endured it all with tremendous struggle even when they dragged Him with the cross. He said, Have you not seen when they drag a dead animal by a rope? Well, they dragged me the same way because my human strength had failed me. They made

me walk by pulling the rope, giving me blows, shoving and beating me with clubs.

These lines foster a reading in which Christ's response stands in for Úrsula's denouncement of the sinners involved with the slave trade. As part of female religious practice of *imitatio christi*, Úrsula has linked herself to Christ. In linking herself to Christ, Úrsula constructs meaning for her own suffering. When she describes Christ being dragged like an animal and suffering the physical torments at the hands of His oppressors, she is denouncing the physical pain and exploitation she and other slaves experience. Úrsula's description of Christ's animal-like physical suffering is linked to the broader Atlantic slave experience when compared to Sandoval's descriptions of slave suffering highlighted previously in this chapter where slaves are treated just as poorly, or in some cases worse than livestock.

In the next few lines, the subtle enunciation of the hybrid voice emerges through Úrsula's reframing of the meaning of obedience. Úrsula participates in the discourse of Christ's free will by rearticulating the significance of humility and obedience. Taken in juxtaposition with New Testament scripture, this portion of Úrsula's journal reveals an anti-colonial and anti-imperial critique. She highlights the difference between suffering at the hands of others, like early modern Atlantic slavers and the Catholic Church that supports the slave institution based on its Just War discourse, and the suffering chosen freely as a humble obedient slave to God's will.

Here, I refer back to Úrsula's question to God, "Why do they find [work] so repugnant?" In this part of the text, Úrsula uses Catholic conventions to deflect her assertiveness in asking God direct questions: "It seems to me that the question had been

insulting and I asked Him to forgive me. Because they had begged me, I had done it". Úrsula prefaces her critique by following the practice of religious writing, underscoring her humility, reverence and submission to the Godhead. The "they" in this phrase most likely refers to the souls in purgatory, who populate Úrsula's visions. Úrsula highlights the active role of these voices to initiate her dialogue with God/Christ. Úrsula underscores her passive role that conforms to the trope of the female visionary mystic. Having established this position of submission, she asks the hard questions about how to obey God and uses Christ as a mouthpiece to provide the answers:

He said, *As you are with a lord and a father, always be humble and obedient. As long as you obey my commandments, all is well and you have nothing to fear . . .*
. He said, *Strive now and follow my will in everything. Have you not heard the Angolan slave say, "My owner orders it?" Do everything in the same way: with the desire to follow my will.*

Úrsula produces an image of the obedient Angolan slave thus emphasizing the role of free will and choice in suffering, submission and slavery to God. Úrsula offers the reader two kinds of people: those that obey Christ's commandments and those that do not obey Christ's commandments. In the entirety of the passage, Úrsula has placed herself, Christ and the Angolan slave in the category of those who obey and are slaves to God's will. Thus, those, like Judas, the passive idle nuns and anyone else who does not submit to God's commandments, are barred from salvation. The owners -- the "Christians" -- are the disobedient group. They are set apart from Christ, Úrsula and the Angolan slave -- all of whom are obedient and submissive. Christ's approval and praise for these kinds of Christians, those that choose to suffer, toil and obey, may be read as Úrsula's covert

critique of those that behave in the contrary manner. In this way, Úrsula's writing uses Christ's voice to denounce exploitation and support her position on the role of work in salvation: the white nuns of her convent do not work and they support the slave trade. Consequently, they shall not attain salvation; the slave traders and those involved with the Catholic system of economic gain based on the backs of slaves who do not freely choose their submission, shall likewise evade salvation. Úrsula's parallel juxtapositioning of these two kinds of people fosters a reading in which Úrsula's voice critiques the pseudo-Christian practice of the transatlantic slave trade.

This argument is furthered when read as an intertextual reference to New Testament scripture:

But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2.7-8).

This passage highlights Christ's choice and free will in His obedience and submission to God's will. It emphasizes His humility and underscores His choice to transform Himself into the form of a servant. Importantly, this term "servant" is better translated as "bond-slave". The exegesis of the Greek word *doulos* can mean either slave or bondservant (Merrill 6). Moreover, Paul employs the term *doulos* to address Roman-Philippi ". . . specifically because of the negative connotations that slavery had for persons preoccupied with honor and social status" (Hellerman 136). This is especially significant when considered alongside the importance of amassing slaves to display power and social status in early modern Iberian society (Phillips 119). The New Testament verse relates

Christ's transformation. He transforms his social status from God to Man. This supernatural transformation underscores the emphasis on social transformation. The degree of separation between God and Man can be equated to the degree of separation between master and slave. By choice and obedience to God's will, Christ closes this gap. But Christ then takes it a step further. He chooses humiliation -- death on the cross -- furthering his descent on the Roman social ladder. This description of obedience unto death -- the humiliation of crucifixion -- superficially appeals to the overt Catholic doctrine of the suffering servant but at its core it reveals a willingness and obedience to transcend social categories.

Úrsula's description of obedience, humility and suffering, produces a unique image of suffering, the kind of suffering freely chosen by Úrsula as a slave of God. This type of slavery groups and ranks Christ, Úrsula and the Angolan slave above those lazy and gossipy individuals who do not obey God's commandments and do not work towards salvation but who unabashedly exploit and persecute others to enrich themselves. Úrsula's words reveal an articulation of an anti-imperial discourse and a critique of Christian practice: This entry in Úrsula's journal fosters a reading in which she denounces the economic motivation of the slave trade and criticizes the idle hands of Ibero-Catholic slave owners. In linking her suffering to Christ, she classifies herself and other slaves like the Angolan slave as those humble hard-working slaves worthy of salvation and morally superior to their social betters.

Chicaba's story

About fifteen years after Úrsula's death, on the other side of the Atlantic Basin, Chicaba, a ten year-old African girl, was captured and loaded onto a slave ship that took

her to Seville, Spain. In her hagiography, a religious biography that conforms to the writing of the Saints' lives, this slave experience was transformed into a mystic experience (Houchins and Fra-Molinero 228). Chicaba was forcibly moved from the African Slave Coast and endured the trauma of transport on the slave ship. She passed through Santo Tomé, arrived in Seville and eventually was sold to work in the household of the Marchioness of Mancera, Juliana Teresa Portocarrero, in Madrid (Houchins and Fra-Molinero 215). She labored in this household until 1703, when upon the Marchioness' death Chicaba was manumitted and provided a stipend under the condition she move into religious service. Chicaba left Madrid and went to Salamanca to enter the Convent of Santa Maria Magdalena, *La Penitencia*. Importantly, she was accepted into the third order, a lay religious order without the rank or status of the legitimate first or second orders, a euphemism for servant and laboring class in the hierarchical religious social ladder of early modern Spanish society. Yet, by her death in 1748, Chicaba had become a well-known mystic both within the walls of her religious community and without (Maeso 127).

In 1752, Padre Juan Carlos Paniagua writes Chicaba's story, adhering to the hagiographic tradition, and claims that Chicaba's religious experiences began in Africa. Paniagua recounts in chapter six that Chicaba, having run away from home again against her parents' orders, finds herself alone in the desert. The narration, here, appeals to the script of the disobedient child that is a convention of the women's religious writing genre known as the *vida*. Chicaba sits under a tree, entertaining herself by playing with her *manillas*, gold bracelets that she has removed from her wrists, when a Spanish ship arrives close to the coast and a young invisible man leads her to the ship where she is

captured and loaded aboard. In the passage that follows the mystical rhetoric is intertwined with the slave experience and the image of the golden bracelets that once symbolized Chicaba's royal lineage and her autonomy is transformed, revealing a reading in which her jewelry is the metonym for her commodified flesh:

[. . .] cuando a la orilla del mar surgiò una nave española, y entonces de improviso la asió de un brazo un joven gallardo, llevándola también todas sus joyuelas. Arrimòla à la orilla del mar, y descubriéndola los de la nave, sin vèr al que la conducía, porque este se hizo invisible à sus ojos, saltò uno de ellos à tierra, y embarcándola en la nave . . . sin tratar de más intereses, y negocios, (Paniagua 51).

This portion of the hagiography fosters various readings. Overtly, the young nobleman represents Christ. However, a disentangling of the mystical rhetoric of Chicaba's captivity narrative belies the nature of the slave experience in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic. The gallant young man who grabs Chicaba by the wrists represents an unseen or perhaps an unknown force that ensnares Chicaba. Perhaps this vision relates to other African individuals who actively participated in Chicaba's own capture and sale to the Spanish slavers. Perhaps this vision is a rhetorical device that illustrates the larger asymmetrical European power of the slave trade. In any case, what emerges from the narrative is a sense of violent oppression and forced removal.

Chicaba's spiritual value is underscored alongside the value of the process of Christianization in her hagiography. Paniagua commonly refers to Chicaba as a precious jewel that added such value to the Mancera's household and the convent in Salamanca (100). Possibly there is another meaning encased within this use of the word

“jewel”. The image of the jewel in medieval homiletic tradition functions as a parable for the value of the wisdom of Christ encapsulated in the New Testament (Gonzales-Casanovas 225). Moreover, there are examples of the image of jewels used as metaphors for redeemed individuals and valuable additions to God’s kingdom in Biblical scripture (Keach 775) and in the tradition of Spanish drama (Levin 60).

Chicaba’s once jeweled wrists are transformed. Her jewelry, an image of status and leisure, is no longer hers to place upon her own wrists. Her jewelry is taken along with her own will. The image of the stolen jewelry betrays the Spanish motivation in the transatlantic enterprise of the commodification of flesh, and is similar to Úrsula’s reference to Judas and his betrayal of Christ for economic gain. Chicaba as a jewel can be read as a sign of her interchangeable value in both the religious and economic systems of Seville, Madrid and Salamanca.

Chicaba arrived to Spain and the Mancera’s household via the commercial port of Seville. The following historiographic source contextualizes the Spanish slave trade and describes scenarios of exchange at times of auction where all legal merchandise was sold in a common space:

Tuvo Sevilla, sin embargo, mayor número de cuentas de cualquier ciudad de española, debido a la variedad de las actividades de su mercado privilegiado: compradores del oro y plata, en la casa de moneda, factores y agentes de firmas extranjeras dedicadas al comercio de perlas y piedras preciosas . . . grandes cargadores de las Indias, arrendatarios de los ingresos de la corona y de la ciudad, *asentistas de los negros, mercaderes de esclavos*, y con ellos nobles y grandes

terratienientes interesados también en importantes negocios (Cortés Lopez citing Carande 20).

In this description of the exchange of goods and services in the Seville marketplace, we observe the exchange of precious stones and their value highlighted alongside the economic value of the slave market. This use of the word “jewelry” or “jewel” comes to signify Chicaba’s flesh and her soul in her hagiography. Thus, in this religious narrative her body and her soul are no longer her own but bound and clad to another’s will. This description replicates the fixity of Catholic rhetoric while covertly denouncing the slave trade and its objectives of material gain at the cost of human suffering. The description of Chicaba’s capture and the associated feelings of terror as part of her slave ship experience are steeped in a tone of necessity and *fait accompli* with regards to God’s will but betray a subversive articulation of anti-imperial discourse.

Although Chicaba’s voice is obfuscated it is not erased. To perceive the textual marronage within this “As-told-to Slave Narrative”, we must consider two levels of enunciation: On one level, Chicaba was a religious mystic who, as part of her hybrid identity, shared an overt Catholic agenda with that of her biographer, Paniagua. On another level, Chicaba’s subject position as an exploited slave who was captured and transported as a commodity across the ocean fuels an agenda of denunciation. In this next portion of Chicaba’s story, Paniagua seems to attempt to document the traumatic enslavement experience during Chicaba’s transatlantic voyage.

At the end of chapter six, Paniagua describes Chicaba’s sufferings on the slave ship, her fear of strangers, her movement away from all that she knows, the unbearable

thirst, the attempts by her slavers to silence her, and ultimately, her desire to throw herself overboard hoping to return to her homeland:

[Chicaba] con el ansia de verse alejar de su tierra, con las lágrimas y fatiga que le ocasionaba verse entre gente extraña, estaba a los umbrales de la muerte, ya por la pena y congoja, ya por la sed que la ahogaba. Gemía sin consuelo, hacían cuanto podían por acallarla los del navio; pero como sus lágrimas procedían más de la sed que la fatigaba que de otra cosa alguna, aunque tantas la afligían no la callaban porque ignoraban lo que quería. . . . Aflígiala el no saber nadar, pues en esta habilidad y destrez, aunque tan niña, la parecía poder libertarse de esclavitud tan penosa y viéndose negada a este consuelo, hizo, según después aseguró ella propia, este pueril discurso: *la nave cuanto más se aleja, va más contra corriente, con que saltando yo en el agua, corriendo como corre hacia mi tierra, sus mismos raudales me han de llevar a ella* (Paniagua 51).

Immediately following this description, the vision of a grand and majestic Lady appears to calm and soothe Chicaba. It is clear that Paniagua records this vision intimating that this Catholic vision was sent by God to steady and reassure Chicaba that her movement away from her homeland was God's will. However, I suggest that this vision should be read as syncretic and I offer a close reading of this vision in my dissertation's detailed chapter on Chicaba.

Here, the emphasis is on Chicaba's enslavement experience during embarkation and transport. It is described as suffering at the hands of others and not suffering that she chooses as a soul freely submitting to God's will. Thus, we can read Chicaba's slave suffering in contrast to the suffering of Christ at the hands of others versus the suffering

he chose as an autonomous and obedient servant of God's will. Like Úrsula, Chicaba's descriptions of her painful slave experiences denounce the unjustified suffering of slaves. As such, Chicaba's description of her suffering can be read as an enunciation of anti-imperial discourse.

Rosa's story

By 1752, when Chicaba's biographer was putting her hagiography to press, Rosa Maria Egipçíaca, an African woman, brought as a little girl from the coast of Whydah, Africa to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was in the process of founding the *Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto*. In this domestic religious space, a lay religious house for women of diverse social and ethnic backgrounds in the urban center of Rio, Rosa became the *de facto* regent (Mott 298). Like Chicaba, Rosa was captured near the Slave Coast. Rosa suffered the trauma of the Middle Passage as an exploited body shipped across the Atlantic. As a child, Rosa was sold in Rio, quite possibly upon the infamous Pedra do Sal, which was the site of transactions in human flesh in Rio in the mid-eighteenth century (O'Dwyer 35). By the 1750s, Rosa had made a name for herself: she was a popular saint to some and a heretic and a fraud to others (Mott 379). Accusations of fraud eventually led to her denouncement in Brazil, and subsequently, the transfer of her case to Lisbon, Portugal in 1763. In October 1771, Rosa's body was found dead in the kitchen of the secret cells of the Holy Office of the Inquisition.

In February of 1762, Rosa was asked to recall her life story as part of her deposition in front of the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio de Janeiro when she was accused of heresy and false sainthood. Her testimony, which functions differently from Chicaba's hagiography and Úrsula's spiritual journal because it may be read as a direct response to

her cruel and abusive suffering, records her movement and exploitation across the Atlantic and into various owner's hands and households in Brazil. Although Rosa's testimony is highly mediated by the Inquisition's formulaic legal discourse, her testimony may be regarded as less mitigated by the constraints of genre conventions applied in constructing Chicaba's official hagiography and a Úrsula's spiritual journal. In between what Rosa says and what she does not say, an image of her slave experience emerges. She testifies that she was six years old when she arrived in Rio:

[Rosa] é o natural da Costa da Mina de Nação Courana, e que veio para esta cidade em idade de seis anos a onde a comprou José de Souza de Azevedo, e a mandou batizar na Igreja da Candelária, . . . (ANTT, Processo 9065, fols. 77v).

In Rosa's testimony before the Inquisition in Lisbon, it states she was from "Ajudá". This is the slave port of Whydah. Rosa informs that she was a young girl when she was brought to Rio. Thus, she suffered the transatlantic slave shipping process, much like Chicaba, Baquaqua and, to a degree, the countless other enslaved persons sent across the Atlantic. While she does not describe the horrors of the trauma of the transatlantic journey, we can read her individual experience alongside Chicaba's.

Rosa names her first owner in Rio and testifies to his abuse both sexual and physical. She states that she was sold when she was fourteen to labor and slave as a prostitute in Minas Gerais, near the township of Inficionado. Upon arriving in Minas, she was sold to Dona Anna Gracês de Morães. In the following passage, Rosa denounces her owners and illustrates her owners' culpability in Rosa's exploitation:

e na companhia deste estive ate a idade de quatorze anos, o qual seu senhor a deflorou, tratou com ela torpemente, e a vendeu para as Minas a Dona Anna

Gracês de Morães, que moravam no Inficionado, a qual estava nesse tempo amancebada com Paulo Rodrigues Durão, e nesta mancebia, continuou por anos ate que casou com o mesmo, tendo sempre no seu serviço a ela depoente que também se desonestava vivendo como meretriz, tratando com qualquer homem secular (ANTT, Processo 9065, fols. 77v).

As was the custom for slaves in Brazil, they had to earn enough money to meet their owners' demands and then earn enough to provide for themselves (Eltis, *Cambridge* 372). Rosa's testimony underscores her owner's hand in forcing Rosa to prostitute herself in the mines. She further denounces her owner's nefarious actions by relating that Anna was living with a man out of wedlock, Paulo Rodrigues Durão. Additionally, Rosa testifies to her movement from Rio to Minas Gerais. While she does not describe this transit in detail, through a comparison with historiographical research we know that the transport from Rio to Minas at this time was grueling and arduous:

[o] certo é que os mais de 500 km que separam o Rio de Janeiro da comarca da vila do Carmo devem ter sido percorridos a pé pela infeliz escrava, provavelmente fazendo parte de um magote de cativos . . . [g]eralmente quando transportados em grupos, os escravos iam em fila indiana, tendo à frente e na retaguarda os condutores montado a cavalo; iam amarrados com cordas ou correntes, chapéu de palha na cabeça, vestidos sumariamente, os mais fortes carregando fardos e farnéis nas costas (Mott 20, 21).

This description relates the bleak and agonizing way in which enslaved persons were treated as chattel when moved from one place to another. Rosa highlights her movement within Brazil. While she does not go into the details of each journey, the way in which

she repeats the times she relocates emphasizes the stress and exploitation suffered as a moving body in the early modern Brazilian landscape.

In addition to the ways she suffered physically as a slave at the hands of others within her slave society, she also describes the pseudo-Christian behavior of her owner Dona Anna. Rosa describes how, unlike the clerics who showed charity for Rosa, her owner was not motivated by Christian charity to release her, and that Rosa only gained her freedom when she was traded for another slave. The following exchange highlights Rosa's awareness of her own body as commodity within the Brazilian slave system:

[E] vendo o dito Padre Francisco Gonçalves, e outras pessoas o vexame que o mesmo Espirito maligno fazia a ela depoente, entrarão por caridade a falar à dita sua Senhora Dona Anna para a libertar; o que ela não quis, só dando se lhe pela liberdade da depoente hum escravo com o que entrou o mesmo Padre e Pedro Rodriguez [Arvelos] a pedir suas esmolos, e concorrerão também com as suas para comprar com um escravo que deram à dita Dona Anna e libertou a ela depoente (ANTT, Processo 9065, fols. 77v-78r).

This portion of Rosa's testimony also reveals her initial encounter with her "Malignant Spirit" and the exorcism powers of Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes. Rosa manipulates the discourse. Prudently, she does not highlight her own recognition of her possession but offers that ecclesiastical authority, Padre Gonçalves Lopes, recognized that she was possessed. Furthermore, she testifies that other persons recognized this as well. This reveals a level of awareness on Rosa's part. To prove herself to be possessed, and thus not a fraud or a blasphemer, she highlights her spiritual director's endorsement

of her possession and then supports that claim legally asserting that there are multiple witnesses to her possession.

Her testimony also hints at the powerful connections and alliances at work to free Rosa. We can decipher important perceptions on Rosa's part regarding her freedom, even though she does not state them explicitly. First, her owner Anna was not given to acts of charity, as were her liberators Padre Gonçalves and Pedro Arvelos. Next, Rosa's value could not be exchanged for money but only for another slave. Third, this arrangement to exchange one slave for another was supported through donations. Thus, Rosa testimony highlights her value as a slave and a commodity for her owner but also highlights her religious value by underscoring the power of the donations and the clerics effort to liberate her from her owner. Rosa's testimony may be read as highlighting her religious value over the economic value of other slaves. Using Catholic rhetoric, Rosa intertwines her stories of suffering with religious discourse and ultimately maneuvers the discourse to highlight the lack of oversight and the lapse in authority of her religious superiors. She constructs her testimony to emphasize her obedience to her superiors' orders, thus, if there were any wrongdoing it would be on the part of the ecclesiastical authority and not her own fault.

To further flesh out Rosa's testimony and highlight her enunciation as a suffering slave in Brazil, Rosa's testimony places an elevated importance on food and food deprivation in her religious experience. This emphasis may be linked to the trauma of the Middle Passage. While food asceticism is common practice for female religious within this context, it is important to note the ways Rosa modifies this ideal. It is part of my larger argument in this dissertation that these Afro-female religious women modified the

trope of the visionary mystic to imbue the repertoire of female religious practice with their unique Afro-voice so as to insert a differentiated symbol based upon their slave experiences. Thus, through these women's manipulation of food imagery they covertly incorporate their unique suffering as victims of food deprivation, partly as survivors of the transatlantic slave journey and partly as laboring bodies within their religious communities. The ways they address food deprivation may have different meanings based on their past experiences as slaves and commodities in the Middle Passage. In the following selection from Rosa's deposition, she describes her religious practice in the care of Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes, and her movement within this religious space that led up to her encounter with the Inquisition:

e neste tempo passava ela depoente como o comer que esse Padre lhe dava, e rezava o seu rosário, e não tinha outra penitencia alguma, porque não podia. [S]ó jejuava alguns dias, que o dito Padre lhe dizia para quebrar as forcas ao tal Espirito Maligno. [E] ao depois passado esse tempo, em que se confessava e comungava muitas vezes, veio com o tal Padre para esta cidade. Se recolheu para o Parto com outras companheiras, a fazia mê a hora de manhã, e outro tanto a noite, porque assim lhe ordenava o dito seu diretor. [E] comia com elas, o que havia e devam as esmolos dos fieis, fazendo suas penitencias, jejuando algumas vezes e tomando disciplina as segundas, quartas e sextas, por que assim lhe ordenava o dito seu diretor; (ANTT, Processo 9065, fols. 78v-79r).

In the passage above, Rosa highlights the importance of food. She subsisted on what her spiritual director gave her. She admits that she fasted when she could. She states that sometimes she could not. We must read her silence as the enunciation of the

anti-colonial voice: She does not directly state that she cannot fast because it reminds her of the kinds of deprivation experiences during her exploitation in the Middle Passage. However, the whole of her Inquisition testimony reiterates her practices as a devout religious practitioner. Thus, if she were not able to engage in one of the most important practices for female religious, food asceticism, she should give a justifiable reason for her inability to submit to this order and practice. Perhaps the impetus for her inability to fast may be attributable to her traumatic memory: fasting may have triggered memories of deprivation during the Middle Passage. In chapter five, I discuss Rosa's vision in which she is described as the Lord's Celestial Banquet Hostess. In this vision, she employs the image of honey and honeycombs. I suggest that she uses this food imagery to compensate for the trauma of food deprivation during the Middle Passage. It is also significant to note that the image of honey may reveal an intertextual Afro-religious reference.

Afro-religious folklore relates a tale in which the Orishá, the divine ancestor/nature spirit, known as Ogun flees into the woods. In order to bring him back to the village, Oshun, another ancestor/nature goddess, spread honey on her lips and body to entice his Ogun's return (Asante 274). Additionally, the symbolic use of specific foods and food preparation is integral to Yoruba ritual beliefs and practices. It represents a balanced and reciprocal relationship between the energies of the material and spiritual worlds (Asante 274). Rosa's repetition and emphasis on the ways she ate, when and with whom, and her use of food imagery during her visions, may be interpreted as syncretic. She may be conflating Afro-religious food ritual with Catholic food practice. Rosa's descriptions of her food practices become a point of departure for

understanding her syncretic religious practice and her experiences as an enslaved person in Brazil. I return to this point in chapter five. Here, I suggest that her food asceticism may be read as more than Catholic practice. Rosa's description of her food asceticism may be linked to her deprivation as a survivor of the Middle Passage. When compared to the suffering associated with food deprivation described previously in this chapter, the horrors of the slave experience in the slave ship and the experiences in transport to the points of embarkation and disembarkation, Rosa's descriptions of food asceticism may be read in connection to the broader discourses of slave suffering in Atlantic history.

Additionally, like Chicaba and Úrsula, Rosa's descriptions of her suffering worked to construct her own identity as God's servant. On September 27, 1758, she wrote a letter describing her persecution and suffering. She was embroiled in scandal. She had lost favor with her spiritual confessor, Frei Agostinho de São José, and was expelled from the *Recolhimento*. In this letter, she critiques the gossipers of her community: "eu por mim, me alegro muito com as infamias e calunias que se pom na minha vida porque há duas castas de gente, hüms que servem a deuss outros de quem deus se sirve: para perseguir os seus, eu bem sei que a mentira têm azas e a vóia muito longe" (ANTT, Pro. 14316, Fl. 42r). Rosa's willingness to suffer slander references the repertoire of female sanctity; much in the way that spiritual foremothers like Catherine of Siena's persecution assured the grace of God. Like Catherine of Siena, Rosa writes and defends herself from lies and persecution from her opposition. Rosa's articulation of two separate classes of people implies that those who take from God cannot also serve God. Rosa inverts the power dynamic, transitioning from a submissive attitude to a dismissive one, when she places herself in the category of God's servant. In classifying herself as

God's servant, she places herself in opposition to those who take from God. Rosa critiques those religious hypocrites and gossipers whom she classifies as "those who take from God" and sets herself apart as God's servant. She does this in an effort to shield herself from further suffering and to make sense of her setting, a community filled with ingrained racial prejudice and discrimination. In this way, she reinvents her slave status: she is no more a slave of man but a slave of Christ, thus, she ranks herself above the religious hypocrites in her Catholic society.

Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's individual slave experiences in specific geopolitical locations, such as the Slave Coast in Africa and the ports of Seville and in Rio de Janeiro and urban centers including Madrid, Lima and Minas Gerais, link them to the broader slave experience by functioning as a site of memory. Roach's framework of Circum-Atlantic interculture posits how these individual memories of horror, pain and agony are linked to larger Atlantic concepts such as the commodification of flesh, thus bridging the above-mentioned gap in Atlantic studies. Memory aids in the construction of a something new and "newness" works as a kind of surrogation that stands in for something old but inherently becomes something else. In the attempt to re-fashion the Atlantic world in the image of Spain, France and England, and in naming these spaces New Spain, New France and New England, "a great deal of the unspeakable violence instrumental to this creation may have been officially forgotten" (Roach 4). Moreover, ". . . circum-Atlantic memory retains its consequences, one of which is that the unspeakable cannot be rendered forever inexpressible: the most persistent mode of forgetting is memory imperfectly deferred" (Roach 4). It is this deferment of memory that surfaces in these Afro-women's textual productions. Through a close reading of

Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's stories of suffering, the local and individual stories of suffering of individuals caught-up in the construction of the early modern transatlantic narrative of the early modern Ibero-Atlantic are rendered expressible and remembered within the broader discourse of Atlantic history.

Conclusion: Linking Individual Stories to Broad Atlantic Movements

The passages of these Afro-women's textual productions highlight these women's suffering as exploited, laboring bodies within the early modern Circum-Atlantic interculture. I have deployed Olsen's term *textual marronage* as a critical tool to highlight these women's hybrid identity: their texts can be read from at least two places of enunciation. First, it can be read as the voice that replicates the hegemonic religious discourse of the imperial Catholic project of Christianization. Second, it can be read as a counter-hegemonic denouncement of the unjustified suffering of their enslaved bodies. I suggest that it is possible to discern two classifications of suffering in these women's descriptions: one, suffering linked to Christ that focuses on Him as the actor and agent. This is the suffering He chooses as an obedient slave to God; and two, suffering linked to Christ that focuses on Him as the recipient and subject of suffering inflicted by the plots, plans and hands of others. Christ's story told from this vantage point highlights the cruelty and hypocrisy of others and their exploitation of Him to suit their own agendas.

At the core of these descriptions is the role of free will in obedience. The choice to obey is different than coercion. The descriptions these Afro-women offer highlight the coercive forces, the torture, agony and pain, imposed on their bodies as commodities in the transatlantic slave trade. These descriptions can be read alongside the pain

suffered by Christ as a body subjected to Jewish law, Roman rule and human betrayal, denial and despoliation. These women's textual productions simultaneously replicate and subvert the dominant religious discourse, thus revealing their hybrid voice. These Afro-women produced texts that at once mimicked the hegemonic discourse of stability and subverted it by forwarding a covert critique of anti-Christian and racially motivated economic agendas of the imperial Iberian project. Looking for ways to link Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's local, individual stories to the broader economic and imperial discourses and trends of the early modern Circum Atlantic world, this chapter has supported a close textual analysis with relevant Atlantic historiography. Úrsula's, Chicaba's, and Rosa's textual productions reveal a critical denunciation of the transatlantic slave trade. By focusing on their descriptions of their slave experiences and comparing these experiences to other descriptions of slave suffering, the network of slave experiences is reinforced and offers new ways to investigate the gaps in the Atlantic scholarship and the multifaceted faces of ethnogenesis present in the early modern Ibero-Circum-Atlantic intercultural.

In this large span of time during the early modern period of the Ibero-Atlantic world, from Úrsula's birth in Lima in 1604 to Rosa's death in Lisbon in 1771, I have analyzed the slave experiences of these Afro-women. This chapter has considered excerpts from these women's textual productions--Úrsula's spiritual journal, Chicaba's hagiography, and Rosa's Inquisition testimony--to reveal their textual agency, the ways in which the documents reveal these women's intervention in the trajectories of their own lives. I read their descriptions of their slave experiences within the Ibero-Atlantic world as metaphorical knots joining together the larger net of slave experiences in the Circum-

Atlantic intercultural. These Afro-women's textual productions and their captivity narratives are mediated by Catholic discourse, thus signalling the importance of their transculturated religious practice in their process to re-invent themselves and construct a new hybridized identity. Their Old and New World slave societies may not have been the initial settings for their first "read-through" in Catholic scripts but it would be these Catholic scripts that would fuel Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's mystic identity construction and their local fame within the hard, stone walls of their Catholic houses, transforming their slave experiences into something else entirely.

CHAPTER TWO: WORDS AND STONES -- The Trope of the Female Visionary Mystic
and Corporeal Identity Construction

One day, most likely at the end of the month of May or the beginning of June, in 1650, the Afro-peruvian *donada*, Sister Úrsula de Jesús, also known as Úrsula de Cristo, inscribed her spiritual diary with the following words, “[t]hey tell me to suffer all without complaint or criticism, not letting anyone know how I really feel, as though I were a stone. Do I not see it? What happens when they step on the side of a brick that does not move and then on those bricks that are loosely placed?” (van Deusen 104). Úrsula’s words create a dividing line between the immutable and the mutable and highlight the value of immutability. Her words reveal many levels of her own awareness about the nature of her surroundings and her various subject positions, meaning the different roles that an individual portrays that may have contradicting obligations. As I pointed out in the introduction, the awareness of the conflicting demands of Úrsula’s subject positions generates her agency. In the proceeding argument, I highlight the various selections of Úrsula’s text that illustrate this awareness. Úrsula is aware of her own participation in the construction of her identity -- she must remain strong and immutable. Additionally, Úrsula’s words illustrate that she knows that in order to play the role of the dutiful and submissive female Catholic religious, she must suffer quietly. Moreover, Úrsula’s use of the stone as a metaphor for her labor and suffering signals her awareness that she must allow herself to be walked all over.

However, this phrase not only reveals her awareness of the parts she must play, this phrase reveals the reinscription of her submissive role with a critical voice. When

she asks, “Do I not see it?”, she rhetorically states, “I see it”. Úrsula equates herself with the immutable stone. She knows that stones work collectively to construct solid foundations. She knows that a well-laid stone is more valuable than loosely placed ones. We may infer that the immutable stone represents Úrsula’s labor and her suffering, her hard work. Thus, she sees her constancy and the significance of her suffering as part a larger context. Perhaps it is a component in the construction of her unique religious identity as an Afro-Catholic. It may reference her attitude about Christianity and the meaning of her own suffering in relationship to Christ’s suffering. Her suffering brings her closer to God. However, the employment of this metaphor also signals Úrsula’s awareness of the value of female sanctity. Perhaps, she sees her labor and suffering in step with a larger tradition of religious women, like Catherine of Siena, Clara de Assisi and Teresa of Ávila. Through the metaphor of the stone, her words construct a cleavage between peoples: strong, laboring, immutable and suffering individuals that work collectively to construct secure solid foundations and mutable individuals that create foundational cracks and weakness. In creating these two categories, she lays the foundation for her criticism of the lazy, weak and hypocritical members of her religious community and she aligns herself with the suffering foremothers who typify female sanctity.

This chapter demonstrates how Úrsula’s words, as well as Chicaba’s and Rosa’s, function like repurposed stones from the foundation of the trope of the female visionary mystic. These Afro- women’s words can be read as their respective identity construction as mystics in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic setting in which these women’s words exhibit a performance, a re-tooling, of aspects of the trope of the female visionary mystic

so as to change others' perceptions as to their slave status and critique their religiously hypocritical society.

Methodology: Identification and Definition of Female Sanctity, the Trope of the Female Visionary Mystic and Imitatio Christi

This chapter examines Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's words in relation to the trope of the female visionary mystic. I provide an overview of the historical context of this trope. Moreover, this chapter considers the baroque Counter-Reformation and its link to mysticism in the Ibero-Atlantic imaginary. This chapter outlines the tradition of female sanctity, its relationship to the hagiographic genre, and the impact that this tradition and genre had on religious women's writing during the early modern period. In this chapter, I identify and distinguish between various Catholic religious practices and attitudes that were associated with the trope of the visionary female mystic in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Thus, this chapter provides an outline of the trope of the visionary female mystic. In defining this term, I connect the trope of the visionary female mystic to the hagiographic genre and the tradition of female sanctity. I suggest that the tradition of female sanctity establishes a code of conduct for female religious behavior and I outline how the hagiographic genre inundated early modern society with motifs of revered female mystical practice. These motifs pervaded early modern society not only through literary forms but also in oral, aural and pictorial representations. These representations highlighted and reinforced certain religious practices and attitudes of exemplary life, which functioned as building blocks for the construction of the identity of the female visionary mystic. To concretize this assertion, I review the behaviors and attitudes of representative subjects of influential Christian

hagiographies, which permeated the discourses of female sanctity and visionary mysticism during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The central behavior and practice for religious women was *imitatio christi*, in its most basic meaning, an imitation of Christ's behavior with specific attention to his suffering. I discuss this practice as part of the repertoire of female sanctity and how each religious women constructed her own unique *imitatio christi*. Later in this chapter, I give a fuller definition of this practice and situate it within its historical and cultural context in the early modern period. It is part of my larger argument that the Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa modified their practice of *imitatio christi* based on their slave experiences of suffering. Thus, in this chapter I illustrate the degree to which the Afro-women of my analysis, Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa, replicated, reiterated, reinvented or deviated from the behaviors and attitudes of these exemplar subjects.

In this chapter, I highlight selections of Chicaba's hagiography, Úrsula's spiritual diary and Rosa's testimony that exemplify their unique and differentiated *imitatio christi*, their respective unification through suffering to their divine husband. *Imitatio Christi* is the religious practice that may be seen as the cornerstone of religious behavior and thus part of the trope of the female visionary mystic. The standard aspects of this practice were diffuse throughout the Ibero-Atlantic Catholic world because of their centrality in the hagiographic genre. Specifically, Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa rearticulated their respective relationships with Christ through a reinvention of the spiritual union. Their words generate a reading in which they construct a unique corporal identity as the suffering **Wife** of Christ. Their respective *imitatio christi*, their suffering which joins them to Christ's suffering flesh, is performed, or reiterated, with the **frustrated language**

KJM 3/30/15 9:07 AM

Comment [1]: I suppose my difficulty with the wife argument must be left for the future. I still don't follow the argument. I don't think you are basing it fundamentally on the expression of jealousy (which is common to the BRIDES of Christ rhetoric). I think you are arguing based on Yoruba practices. But the connections still aren't very clear to me.

KJM 3/27/15 10:19 AM

Comment [2]:

of painful, jealous and sensual love. This tone stands in contrast to the descriptions of self-inflicted pain and self-deprivation that typify the words of these women's European-descendant counterparts. Thus, Chicaba's, Úrsula's and Rosa's words reveal descriptions of physical suffering based on their slave experiences and illustrate a manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic. These women's respective identity constructions are inseparable from the genre of the hagiography and its dependent genre, the spiritual autobiography, vis-a-vis the trope of the female visionary mystic. In this chapter, I review the genre of the spiritual autobiography and its dependence on the hagiographic genre and situate their relationship to the spiritual diary and Inquisition testimony. Each of these women's writings functions to reveal these women's transformations from slave to mystic because their words illustrate an identity construction based on the characteristics of other female visionary mystics.

This dissertation argues that Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa deployed agency through their respective manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic within their respective Catholic geo-political contexts of early modern Spain, colonial Lima and Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In my introduction, I discussed Roach's concept of *Role Icon* that explains the genesis of this trope. His term *Surrogation* explains the perpetuation and modification of this trope in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic world. In this chapter, I argue that Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa recognized, understood and manipulated the trope of the female visionary mystic to change others' perceptions about their respective ascribed slave status. These women's words reveal a rearrangement of Catholic images and representations, and a reinvention of religious practice, which draws from the repertoire of iconic religious female visionary

KJM 3/27/15 10:19 AM

Comment [3]: I don't ever really see this frustrated quality in the examples you analyze.

mystics. These Afro-women selected, repeated and re-invented a set of behaviors to align their identities with what I call the Mystic Role Icon. Furthermore, I suggest that these women used this trope in unique ways. First, the manipulation of this trope functioned as a vehicle to critique their respective religiously hypocritical and socially (emergent racially) stratified societies. Specifically, they invoked the supernatural space of purgatory, in the case of Úrsula and Rosa, to lambast hypocritical male religious and to eulogize marginal women. Second, they used visionary space to covertly incorporate and infuse Afro-religious cosmology into overtly Catholic ideology.

In chapter three I discuss Chicaba's hagiography. I argue that her description of her mystical encounters, specifically, her African baptism, belie a covert and intertextual reference to Yorùbá mythology. Furthermore, I suggest that her poetry may be read as traditional Yorùbá oral narrative genre known as *oriki*, personal praise poetry and bride lamentations. I argue that her religious practice incorporates African cosmological imagery fused with an overt Catholic ideology. Then, in chapter four I discuss the ways in which Úrsula critiques her emergent racially stratified society and religiously hypocritical community as well as ways to read her suffering as an exploited slave body in the Convent of Santa Clara in Colonial Lima Peru. Additionally, I develop a close reading of her Palm Sunday vision that suggests a reading of the practice of Yorùbá spirit possession known as mounting. This covert incorporation of an Afro-religious voice is most prevalent in Rosa's Inquisition testimony. In chapter five I provide a close reading of her Inquisitional testimony, which reveals her Afro-Catholic voice in the description of her vision of the Sacred Hearts of the Holy Family and a social critique of her religiously hypocritical society.

One common thread between the words of these three Afro-women is a description of their suffering linked to their slave experience. While Úrsula did not experience the Middle Passage, unlike Chicaba and Rosa, her spiritual diary details her suffering as a slave in her society and ties her suffering to Christ's suffering. These Afro-women's words reveal a suffering that appears unique compared to the types of self-inflicted suffering typical of other female religious. Moreover, their words reveal a unique relationship to the flesh of Christ. Perhaps it is their respective suffering as slaves and exploited bodies that fuels their uniquely intimate identification with the suffering of their divine spouse and permits a corporeal identity construction as the suffering wife. This, in conjunction with their respective re-purposing of the trope of the female visionary mystic, facilitates their respective transformations from slaves to mystics.

Cultural Milieu: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Ibero-Atlantic Mysticism

In, "Spain and the Golden Age of Mysticism", Stephen Haliczer situates the influence and authority of the trope of the female mystic during the early modern period. He outlines the political and cultural backdrop, which facilitates the proliferation in the belief of female mystical powers and suggests the impetus of its popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Southern European geopolitical space. Specifically, his chapter outlines the polarization between the rationalist and empirical trends that emerge in the Northern Protestant countries, where the scientific revolution became fossilized into the bedrock of spiritual life, which stands in contrast to Southern European Catholic countries, where belief systems in supernatural forces were seen as the pillars of the Counter Reformation's ideological pursuits. I quote Haliczer at length, here, to offer a broad overview of the paradigm in which I locate Úrsula's,

Chicaba's and Rosa's words and to illustrate the framework for thinking about a working definition for the trope of the female visionary mystic:

The impulse that inspired the Renaissance magus to seek an influx of the celestial spirit through purely magical means continued, but it now had to flow into strictly orthodox and Christian channels, with God acting directly and even capriciously to deploy supernatural forces rather than as the creator and regulator of natural law, as understood by Newton and Boyle . . . What became obvious as the scientific revolution went forward and Spain failed to participate in it is that there is an enormous difference between God considered as a regulating force and God considered as active agent. The former invites speculation and research, and the latter simply imposes awe and acceptance, backed up by all the coercive force that orthodoxy can command. Instead of attempting to read the mind of God through the study of nature, therefore, Spanish intellectuals drew on their long mystical tradition and sought to apprehend God directly by opening themselves to his own acts of self-revelation (12).

It is in this milieu where we, as modern readers, encounter the words and the identity construction of these early-modern Afro-Catholic female mystics. A tradition of understanding God as an active agent is traced to the Middle Ages. In response to the Protestant Reformation, Iberian intellectuals imposed "awe and acceptance" of God through an orthodox means of opening up oneself to receive the divine revelation of God. It is this orthodox manner of becoming a vessel of the divine message that works to construct the trope of the female visionary mystic and diffuse this message of what it

means to be a mystic throughout the Ibero-Atlantic socio-political and religious matrix in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Central to this understanding of the trope of the female visionary mystic is the term *orthodox*. As Arenal and Schlau inform, there had been a medieval tradition of influential female mystics who established their authority within the Church. In Spain, too, at this time, it became prestigious to be a female mystic (8). Moreover, in the sixteenth century, female culture was preserved through the publication of the lives of the Italian saints Catherine of Siena and Angela de Foligno. These texts underscored the importance of prophetic visions and ecstatic trances. These characteristics of female sanctity typified the quest for direct communication with God, and, in Counter-Reformation Spain, and its American colonies, as well as Portugal and Brazil, were subjected to suspicion and scrutiny. The goal to establish and promote orthodox female religious behavior served to control women's communication with God (limiting their power and influence, or at the very least, redirecting it through male gatekeepers). Subsequently, this type of control via "censorship of women's visionary authority contributed to its remaining a 'lost' tradition" (Arenal and Schlau 9). Thus, the trope of the female visionary mystic has its origins and establishes its authority in the medieval period but this sphere of female influence and power became increasingly questioned through the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a result of the Catholic Reformation, also known as Post-Tridentine Reformation. Mysticism as an avenue for religious influence became relegated to the backburner for many female religious, thus, Arenal's and Schlau's categorization of it as a "lost tradition". However, Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa 's words may be read as a recovery of this "lost"

tradition. Their words employ the authority of the prophetic vision as a vehicle for their transformation of their social status. This recovery process is complex because the Church seemed to function in a very paradoxical fashion during the early modern era. This paradox can best be understood by considering the cultural and social tensions of the imperialist project in the Ibero-Atlantic world during this time period.

It is important to consider the diverse tensions that formed the foundation of this paradoxical and conflictual cultural milieu where individual religious expression is valued as long as it is seen as orthodox. In the first corner, we see the highlighted value and importance of mystical women to counteract Protestant Reformation heresies. Female authority had been cultivated within European culture since the Middle Ages. In the second corner, we see this same authority used by prominent males within the Church to combat these heretical forces by trying to homogenize very personal and intimate encounters with the divine. In the third corner of this cultural foundation, we witness a time of colonial expansion in the New World, which incorporated large influxes of African and Amerindian peoples as part of the slave trade, where notions of orthodoxy go head to head with heterodoxy on a daily basis. In the fourth corner, as a means to mortar and solidify these ideal notions of religious orthodoxy and sanctity, the hegemonic structure deploys a myriad of artistic modes to inculcate its burgeoning populations within this inherently conflictual process of the valorization of the individual but only when it conforms to the patterns of every other individual. Thus, I suggest that the ways in which individuals came to perceive the notions of female sanctity, and the associated perceptions of themselves in relationship to these ideals is based on the paradoxical

process of encouraging uniform adherence to a standard through the variations of disparate and uniquely individualized permutations of artistic display of diversity.

What was revered as pious and holy was disseminated throughout the Catholic world in many forms. Images and representations of holy life were ubiquitous through decor, dress, jewelry and architecture in the baroque Ibero-Atlantic world. As Arenal and Schlau point out, “[. . .] Spanish society . . . was rich in visual, oral and aural arts. Painting, sculpture, and monumental architecture were predominantly religious in theme and objective. Music and song, theater and dance, legends and ballads, and crafts and pageantry marked daily life” (8). Furthermore, Ronald Morgan suggests in his introduction to *Spanish American Saints and the Rhetoric of Identity, 1600-1810*, that “American-born Spaniards viewed themselves as members of many social entities, including family, religious order, trade guild, Catholic confraternity, city and province. Accordingly, the promotion of New World saints in religious art, sermons, hagiographies, and verse allowed criollo devotees to articulate these multiple identities and loyalties” (16).

These artistic efforts touched every aspect of life for individuals living during the early modern period throughout the Ibero-Atlantic world. These ubiquitous and diverse cultural productions colored the imaginaries of people living within the colonial matrix during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. With regards to the subjects of my analysis, it important to understand how this cultural milieu, which infused quotidian life with limitless religious stimuli and ornamentation, fostered a unique setting for African and Afro-descendant individuals and fueled their identity construction.

The following discussion is based on the baroque setting of Minas Gerais, Brazil and in many ways this geo-political space is similar to the urban and multiethnic realities of colonial Lima. As I outline in chapter one, the urban settings of Lima and Minas Gerais were comparable demographically with regards to black populations. In the following discussion, I highlight the ways in which African and Afro-descendant peoples participated in the construction of the polysemic baroque imaginary that typified the colonial experience in these urban centers. In cities where large portions of the population were increasingly African and Afro-descendant, the need for a diverse labor force increased. This facilitated social mobility for many African and Afro-descendant individuals and figured into the understanding of identity construction and how they chose to represent that identity and insert African imagery into their surroundings.

As Tania Costa Tribe explains in her article “The Mulatto as Artist and Image in Colonial Brazil”, “[t]he churches in the gold mining region . . . functioned as a visual reminder of theological truths established by the counter-reformation and [were] firmly upheld in the Portuguese colonial world” (75). This baroque architecture was more than an artistic motif. Encapsulated within this imagery was the cultural message of the time period that mirrored the evolving religious, and increasingly multi-ethnic, discourse. This type of art typical of the churches in colonial Minas Gerais displayed “iconography [which] points to African conceptions of religion in which there is no clear distinction between the profane and the sacred” (75). For example, Tribe describes an image of a paradise setting crafted by black or mulatto artisan on panels in an Ouro Preto church. Images of elephants are included in this colonial depiction. This suggests the artist’s hand in placing this scene in Africa (75). As Tribe points out, African

worldviews tend to emphasize a balance between religious and secular life. The separation of these spaces is a baroque European conception. Thus, in religious imagery that includes images of quotidian life, we may discern the hand of an African or Afro-descendant artist. Additionally, the majority of the artisans employed in the construction of viceregal Peru were freed blacks. In his article “El artesano negro en la arquitectura virreinal limeña”, Emilio Harth-Terré points out that the majority of the carpentry, marble work, paintings and sculptures made in colonial Peru were crafted by blacks and displayed in churches and commissioned by the religious brotherhoods. The iconography created during the baroque period may be read as a space where Africans and Afro-descendant individuals inserted images that referenced other ideas about religiosity. Tribe emphasizes, “[t]he rich eighteenth century European fashions of the Brazilian pageants were yet another expression of the slaves’ determination to absorb and transform the foreign elements of the host culture, investing them with new meanings and turning them into their own individual symbols” (74).

The baroque encompassed constant tensions between the shifting perspectives of theoretical ideologies about *castas* and slave systems and their practical application. Moreover, Tribe states “the practice of art played an important role in the construction of a sense of identity among communities of blacks” (72). Thus, in theory the Catholic Church worked to establish a homogenous and highly stratified society where each and every person knew his or her place according to class and *casta*. In reality, urban centers like Minas Gerais, Rio and Lima, and even Madrid, were in transformation socially and economically to become a place that understood the varied worth of individuals from peoples with diverse backgrounds.

However, this social and economic reality was not a common perception at the time, and consequently, many non-white and non-elite individuals, in order to survive and thrive, had to encounter alternative ways of subverting the status quo. Tribe also points out that there was not necessarily space for art that highlighted the inequities of the slave system, or that represented the African cultural or aesthetic values. However, these African cultural values could be observed in some of the religious imagery commissioned at the time, as well in the jewelry worn by slave and freed women.

Significantly, Tribe illustrates that in the religious atmosphere of the Brotherhoods, Africans could “assemble and rebuild some form of cultural identity, using ‘orthodox’ Christian imagery to express their own symbolic needs” (73). Interestingly, Tribe suggests that the art and pageantry displayed during the *congados* and other celebrations by the religious Brotherhoods were often paid for by the slaves’ masters, but more importantly, this represented a form of “controlled subversion” (73). That is, because these practices took place within the liminal spaces and holy occasions, the Africans could “dissipate” some of the tensions of life where the social structures conspired to keep blacks under the control of whites. It is this space of dissipation that becomes a space of subversion and identity construction.

In her chapter “Humble Slaves and Loyal Vassals” in *Imperial Subjects*, Mariana L.R. Dantas explains that during the mid-eighteenth century Minas Gerais, Brazil became the largest region for free slaves. In addition, due to the mining community there was an elevated importation of slaves from Africa. Furthermore, Dantas specifically explores a petition that requests royal intervention and African representation for *pretos*, blacks, and other freed slaves abused and subjected to extreme discrimination at that hands of

whites. Dantas suggests that in this unique space composed of a large and diverse community of freed slaves, individuals created and performed their “fluid” identities so as to access various social resources and move vertically up the social ladder. She offers that “[b]y employing the same markers of social distinction that were often the basis of white privilege, pardos and occasionally even pretos, were sometimes able to circumvent their ‘inferior condition’” (123).

It is part of my larger argument, that the baroque Catholic religious space may have been used by some individuals to veil their own heterodox worship practice. By overtly conforming to Christian practice, thus, employing the same markers of (white) social distinction, in this case Catholic religiosity and piety, individuals like Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa, constructed a space where they could circumvent their slave status. For example, Úrsula came to understand the privileges associated with the social position of mystic while in the employ of Luisa Melgarejo (van Deusen 15). In conjunction with her manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic, Úrsula learned firsthand the practices that would permit her to set herself apart. She learned how to re-articulate these powerful Catholic markers of social distinction, and thus, circumvent her inferior condition as a slave, or *donada*. Similarly, Chicaba learned much in her servitude in the Mancera household. As Paniagua details, she learned about Catholic discourses and how to wield them. Rosa learned to manipulate the exorcism ritual to re-articulate her spiritual possession. During these indoctrinations into Catholic praxis, these Afro-women constructed reputations as mystics. Then, they could covertly subvert and critique the social and religious hierarchy.

Úrsula's and Rosa's words may be read in such a way. Chicaba's descriptions are more mediated as they are filtered through her biographer's narrative structure. Thus, for these Afro-women, religious spaces may have fostered ways that permitted them to perceive of their unique religious participation within the larger Catholic religious context. We may read these women's words as marking their process in their Afro-Catholic identity construction. The baroque, Counter-Reformation Ibero-Atlantic cultural milieu offered many messages about what was considered valuable and ideal. Summarily, these messages about what was saintly were diffused through sermons, music, drama and, importantly, for many literate individuals, books. The importance of the hagiography as a literary genre in the development of the Ibero-Atlantic imaginary, and especially in the New World, cannot be underestimated. Moreover, what was understood to be part of the compendium of mystic practice was intertwined with the ideal of female sanctity. This ideal typology is embedded in what I term the trope of the female visionary mystic.

Definition and Explanation of Trope

I am not merely asserting that religious women in the early modern period, and specifically, Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa, used the trope of the female visionary mystic in a rhetorical or literary way. While their respective writings, testimonies, and biographies include these conventions, I use the term trope to denote a broader discursive category. David Clippinger suggests that the term trope is defined as "a figure of speech that denotes or connotes meaning through a chain of associations" (*Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*). The entry goes on to reference Saussure's theory of signification, in which meaning is conveyed through a chain of signifiers, and Freud's "architecture of the

unconscious”, being the “interactive processes of the preconscious, conscious, and the unconscious”, to expand the definition of trope beyond the basic notion of a literary device and locate it within the construction of meaning. The entry concludes by asserting “theories of ‘meaning’ or knowledge both utilize tropes to explain reality but, in addition, are also tropes in and of themselves, shades of an infinitely deferred universal” (Clippinger). In other words, a trope operates within a broad discursive social sphere to construct and link meanings that are transmitted to the psyches of individuals inculcated into a given society.

I use the term trope, in the current study, to encapsulate the connected meanings of varied images, behaviors, and abilities associated with the female mystic, which were diffuse within the early modern Ibero-Catholic setting. These images, behaviors and abilities were linked to the practice of everyday life for women religious. They signified power within the early modern context and made up parts of many individuals’ conscious and unconscious realities. To explain how these various images, behaviors and abilities worked in tandem, to compose what I term the trope of the female visionary mystic, I employ the theoretical concept of nodal points. In *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, Marianne W. Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips clarify Laclau and Mouffe’s definition and offer that a nodal point is a “privileged sign around which other signs are ordered; and other signs acquired their meaning based on their relationship to the nodal point” (26).

I argue that the behaviors and practices associated with the trope of the female visionary mystic may be understood as nodal points. For these Afro-women, the performance of *imitatio christi* is a central and privileged sign and needs to be understood

in relationship to other behaviors, the repertoire of female sanctity. I suggest that these Afro-Catholic women tapped into and used the trope of the female visionary mystic in a unique manner. Through their respective re-articulations or re-constructions of this trope, they were able to shift others' perceptions. For many in their respective communities, these women were seen primarily as mystics instead of slaves. Thus, their respective performances permitted their transformation from slave status to mystic status. In addition, their performance and this emerging identity as mystics offered them a space to critique their own societies. I provide a close reading of their words in each of my subsequent chapters that illustrates their specific manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic, the repertoire of female sanctity and their particular *imitatio christi*.

These women's writings illustrate the manipulation of their own narratives so as to align with the narratives of the ideals of female sanctity in the early modern period. I use the term ideal type as outlined by Max Weber in his discussion of the "objectivity" of knowledge. Granted, Weber develops his discussion to explore the "realities" of economic systems and as such uses many examples drawn from the discipline of economics. However, I use the framework that he develops in this discussion to understand the process of concept formation with regard to historical ideal types, like the ideals that construct the trope of the female visionary mystic.

In Weber's discussion of the process of concept formation, he suggests that the construction of "ideas" of historical phenomena gives ideal impressions of procedural formation, which bring together relationships and events of historical life into the "internally coherent conceptual cosmos" (Weber 387). For example, the idea of a mystical experience or a vision leaves the realm of the abstract and enters the discernible,

empirical world as authors attempt to write and give words to the experiences. From the unification of these written or verbalized responses to this mystical phenomenon a coherent concept of the mystical vision is internalized. Or, to borrow a term from Jean Piaget, a new schema is created, the mystical schemata (not stigmata). Further, Weber surmises that the main characteristic of this schema is its ideal or utopian nature. This characteristic is derivative of an “accentuation of particular elements of reality” (387). Primarily, this concept of the mystical experience is judged as perfect, thus, utopian. Secondly, this concept of the mystical experience is defined by the accentuation of particular elements of reality, such as a shift in light or darkness, hearing a celestial voice, bilocating -- mentally altering one’s physical presence to another geographic space, or physical pain, such as the stigmata.

Moreover, Weber suggests that we can take abstract and theoretical notions of historical reality and bring them into existence by the formation of ideal types. Accordingly, Weber supposes that these ideal types exist in reality even though they are manifestations of abstract practices. For example, the mystics of the early modern period based their understanding of their experiences on the concepts and notions -- the ideal types -- of mystical experiences of the late Middle Ages. Their mystical knowledge came in part from reading and in part from oral traditions and visual representations. These stories and traditions were not transmitted with the purpose of providing a verifiable, historical, and objective analysis of the mystical experience but with the purpose of interpreting the uninterpretable. The goal was to transform the abstract celestial experience into a terrestrial practice. Weber posits that these ideal types are valuable in that they direct judgement: “It is not a representation of the real, but seeks

to provide representation with unambiguous means of expression” (Weber 387). For example, a mystic of the late Middle Ages may not have tried to represent the real but instead tried to construct a clear category and standard for quantifying the mystical vision, which would permit others to understand her own experiences.

Weber states that the objective of historical research is to determine how close to or how far from reality individual cases are in relation to the ideal type. A key component to concept formation in social environments is that ideal types must lack all internal contradiction (Weber 388). Thus, we see that mystics and their relations of their visions are evaluated based on how closely they conform to the standard for divine practice, or how they deviate from such a practice, perhaps entering into the realm of the diabolical. Additionally, Weber suggests that the construction of ideal types is a tool to understand historical representation and cultural significance (388). Specifically, he offers that the function of the ideal type is “an attempt to comprehend historical individuals . . . through genetic concepts” (390). Weber uses the term genetic to mean essential. Paradoxically, we can understand an ideal type not to be real in the practical and tangible sense but still thought to be achievable. The ideal type is representative of essential characteristics that conform to perfect or utopian concepts.

In sum, the ideal type is used to judge historical individuals. Weber delineates his discussion to emphasize two particular relationships between the “idea” in a practical sense and the “idea” in the sense of an “ideal type of an epoch constructed as a conceptual support” (391). Thus, the ideal type of the mystic of the late Middle ages functions within the early modern period to support women religious and their claims to authentic (ideal) mystical revelations. As Weber explains,

[a]n ideal type of particular social circumstances that can be abstracted from certain characteristic social phenomena of an epoch . . . appears to contemporaries themselves as an ideal to be striven for in practice, or as a principle that can be used in regulation of certain social relationships (391).

Thus, for the women religious of the early modern period they believed that the ideal typology of the mystic of the late Middle Ages was to be striven for in practice and used as a measuring stick to gauge their own relationship with Christ and a measure of their own female sanctity. This typology was typified and communicated through the expression of the mystic behaviors of individuals like Catherine of Siena, Clara of Asís and Teresa of Ávila. These women's comportment exemplified the essential mystic behaviors. Behaviors such as ecstatic unions with the Divine Spouse, celestial visions and voices, the attitude of the suffering servant and practice of *imitatio christi* composed the repertoire of female sanctity and were diffuse within the early modern Ibero-Atlantic in part by the proliferation, production and distribution of the hagiography.

Female Sanctity and Hagiographic Discourse in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries

The tradition of female sanctity is related to narrowly defined ideals for the roles of women in the early modern period. Importantly, these ideal roles may be limited to discursive spheres about women in general, as marginal and lower class women may not have been uniformly expected to conform to these ideals that were primarily applied to expectations of elite women's behavior. However, these ideal types were useful to discern a superior religious performance. This conceptualization of the ideal role is cemented to the hagiographic tradition. Exemplary femininity is constructed in

hagiographic discourse. The hagiography, the religious biography also known as the *vitae*, *vida* or *vida de santo*, surged in popularity and production, especially in the New World, to thwart Protestant theological trends and impose imperial indoctrination. In his *Sacred Biography*, Thomas J. Heffernan outlines the ideology of female sanctity and highlights certain conventions of the *vida*, which are uniquely feminine. Moreover, he writes that there are four types of experiences that typify female religious realities: “the redefinition of ideas of kinship; freedom from the Pauline notion of sexual ‘indebtedness’; the importance of prophetic visions; and the change from virgin, wife, or widow to *sponsa Christi*” (185). These ways of thinking about the classification of female religious become the building blocks for the trope of the female visionary mystic: How a woman re-defines her familial relationships and swears obedience and loyalty to her religious community (Lavrín 38), how she works to combat the sins of her weak flesh (Heffernan 188), how she relates her prophetic visions (Arenal and Schlau 10) and how she becomes the Bride of Christ (Lavrín 38) are the questions that help define the trope of the female visionary mystic and the ideal of female sanctity in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic setting.

In the early modern period, religious women were classified by their religious experiences and were judged in relation to notions of the ideal types of perfect experience. For example, the perfect experience for women religious in the Christian tradition was based on reverence of virginity. “Virginity and martyrdom became complementary ideas, and the physical subjection of the body to the pains and ordeals of ascetic discipline was an integral part of sanctity” (Warner 70). In accordance with the ideological forces of the Counter Reformation, the Virginal experience (to live their lives

in emulation of the Holy Vessel, the Virgin Mary) was the perfect or ideal experience. “Held in highest esteem were Madonnas and young virgins. Having transferred many of life’s transactions of the mind, [religious women] were nurtured on the ideal” (Arenal and Schlau 8). Marina Warner writes that the idea that virginity confers power is twofold: first, Church fathers instructed that a virginal life ameliorated the penalties of the Fall in women and thus was a holy experience. Secondly, the image of the virgin was the supreme image of wholeness, thus again perceived as holiness (72). Additionally, womens’ experiences were judged in relation to another essential female experience: the weak, “deceived and deceiving Daughter of Eve” (McKnight 38). The image of woman as weak, deceived and deceiving composes part of the ideology of the era. “Because of the curse of Eve in Eden, the idea of woman’s subjection was bound up in Christian thought with her role as mother and as temptress” (Warner 58). This antithesis to the ideal experience was not to be emulated by woman religious. However, it is ideal in the Weberian sense as previously outlined. Female weakness is an accentuation of a particular element of reality, which merges with the historical phenomena to create an internally coherent conceptual cosmos in which women are weak and thus, the ideal type of religious women emerges as one who triumphs over her weakness. Thus, I suggest the image of female weakness as ideal because it is a requisite component to the religious triumph over weakness, which is ostensibly ideal.

Moreover, the link between what is understood to be the ideal of female sanctity and the hagiographic genre cannot be separated. The notion about female sanctity was constructed through the reiteration and repetition of these stories of famous pious women. “In Spanish America, the lives of the saints were widely distributed: devotional

readings of the saints formed part of family readings and structured daily monastic life” (Ibsen 62). As Morgan points out, “the *vida de santo* was an important part of mid-colonial literary production, exercising directly and indirectly a central role in the religious, intellectual, and socio economic life of most hispanized sectors of colonial society” (21). Uniquely in the Spanish-American setting, Morgan notes that criollo subjects were the protagonists of many seventeenth century *vidas*, which stood in contrast to many of the earlier *vidas* that highlighted the role of Iberian-born protagonists. He also points out that this process of hispanization and urbanization in the New World allowed for an emergence of new kinds of hagiographical subjects. The subjects of these texts were not limited to missionaries: bishops, nuns, laymen and women, as well as persons of mixed race, became the subjects of hagiographies in the seventeenth century (21).

Still, the authorship of the genre of the hagiography proper (Morgan 22) rested on the shoulders of male clergy during the early modern period. In some instances, the biographer knew the subject of his text, for example, she may have been under his spiritual guidance. In most cases, the biographer did not know the subject personally and had to depend on earlier literary, legal and oral sources. Moreover, generally the hagiography was composed shortly after the death of the subject. Such is the case with Chicaba. Her biographer, Paniagua composed her *Compendio de la vida* based on her written *vida espiritual*, her spiritual autobiography, (now lost) and her letters (also lost), in addition to testimonies from her previous spiritual confessors and those who had known Chicaba during her life in Spain.

Not only were women the subjects of these hagiographic vidas they were writers as well, albeit of a different genre of writing. Women wrote about their own lives and other women in their communities in spiritual biographies and spiritual autobiographies and diaries, as in the case of Úrsula. Additionally, it is important to note that Inquisition testimony falls within this category of writing because it was grounded in the philosophy of the confessional act (McKnight 40). These various genres of women's writing may be seen in the same light. The religious woman's words function toward a similar end: she "[. . .] wrote beyond her confessional experience, the product of her recollections offered her and her spiritual director the opportunity to learn about levels of her belief that may not have been well-expressed, or expressed at all, during the confessional act" (Lavrín 314). This act of writing facilitated the awareness of religious women's own thoughts and understandings about their beliefs and their faith. Through this process women writers could transform their lived experiences into ideal experiences.

Women's Writing and the Trope of the Female Visionary Mystic

Women's writing in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic literary landscape colors in the space between the dichotomies of reality and imaginary and intercalates the lived experience with the ideal experience. Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's words are informed by their familiarity with the tradition of female sanctity and their performance, or re-articulation, of the trope of the female visionary mystic. This trope is based on certain mystical practices as outlined and exemplified in various hagiographical texts that many women were exposed to as part of their daily life. As Kathryn McKnight states, these texts "form an interwoven tradition as their shared history structures meaning" (32). This shared history, propagated in diverse ways as part of the baroque imaginary, not only

structures meaning but fosters a unique path for Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's corporeal identity construction.

In the following section of this chapter, I outline the genres of women's spiritual writing, define the use of scripts, and discuss the tradition of women's writing and religious practice that transmitted the significance of the trope of the female visionary mystic and constructed meaning for the subjects of my analysis. Specifically, I explore the practice of religious women's writing which is located between the realms of reality and imaginary as outlined by Teresa of Ávila, the subject of arguably the most influential hagiographies during the early modern period, and the reference for other women's spiritual writings and mystical practice. I discuss the definition of mysticism and its discernment. I provide an overview of the role of visions in the mystical experience and discuss the role of *imitatio christi* to contextualize aspects of the trope of the female visionary mystic. Additionally, I distinguish the practices of *imitatio christi* that are associated with the trope of the female visionary mystic from other female religious practice. Toward this end, I examine the *imitatio christi* of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's contemporaries of European descent, Madre Antonia Lucia del Espiritu Santo (1646-1709) and Sor Josefa Sebastiana de la Santisima Trinidad (1709 - 1757) to contrast their self-inflicted suffering to the suffering as exploited slave bodies experienced by the women of my analysis. Specifically, I discuss how these religious womens' *imitatio christi* are distinct from those of Úrsula, Chicaba, and Rosa Maria. I have chosen to contrast the *imitatio christi* of these two criollas with the *imitatio christi* of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa for the following reasons: first, both Josefa Sebastiana and Antonia Lucia entered religious life impeded by economic obstacles. Antonia Lucia was "hija de

hidalgos empobrecidos” and after her father’s death, she helped her mother in her cigar business, then married for a brief time, so as to improve her economic situation, as was the norm women from her class (Itúrburu 100). Josefa Sebastiana was the daughter of *hidalgos* as well, the lowest class of nobility. She had no financial backing and was precluded from becoming a black veiled nun (Ibsen, *Hiding Places* 253). Thus, their Antonia Lucia’s and Josefa Sebastiana’s lower socio economic status makes them more suitable than affluent criollas for comparison with Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa.

Next, Antonia Lucia worked hard to found two *beaterios* in colonial Peru. Thus, her geographical location in the urban center of Lima, Peru, is comparable to Úrsula’s and Rosa’s. Specifically, Antonia Lucia re-invented her *imitatio christi* and employed the mystical vision so as to establish her authority in founding the beaterios (Arenal and Schlau 298) in a way that may be seen as similar to Rosa’s use of mystical visions to secure funding for the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto in Rio. Finally, Josefa Sebastiana’s extreme penitence and asceticism, as well as her physical oppression by the devil, underscore the ways she used her body to “map out [her] own corporeal and discursive space” (Ibsen, *Hiding Places* 242). Kristine Ibsen discusses Josefa Sebastiana’s manipulation of her own body that was typical of Hispanic baroque sensibilities where suffering and obedience were the defining principles of the embodiment of Christ. There are sufficient descriptions of her practice to compare to the practices of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa and moreover, as Ibsen points out, a close reading of Josefa Sebastiana’s practice signals the extent to which women internalized the corporeal rhetoric into their discourse that simultaneously conformed to and challenged the hagiographic saintly image (Ibsen, *Hiding Places* 252). Thus, based in part on these

factors, Josefa Sebastiana and Antonia Lucia practice may be seen as representative of Spanish American female discursive religious practice and because their practice is similar to that of Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa, the differences in the way they describe their respective practices fosters a reading in which Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's unique description of their *imitatio christi* and their suffering may be link to their experience as slaves in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic.

These *criollas* controlled their bodies (Ibsen 84), inflicting their own suffering, in accordance with female religious tradition to understand Christ's suffering. The female religious practice of self-mortification is a signifier of the trope of the female visionary mystic and an aspect of ideal of female sanctity. Ibsen relates various examples that illustrate the grotesque and bloody ways that many women inflicted physical suffering upon themselves. These practices of humiliation and bloody self-mutilations show the degree to which these women internalized their place in the social order of their societies. This practice of self-affliction testifies to the ways in which these women were controlled by the hegemonic and imperial discourse: this continued practice ensured that their own bodies and their minds were engaged in replicating their subservience to the social order (75). The descriptions of self-mortification color the hagiographies of the Catholic world. This physically tortured image of female sanctity as imbued with self-mortification seemed concrete in the face of "abstract" spiritual values, and as Ibsen points out, appealed to the baroque reading public (74). "In their life stories [most nuns in Spanish America] insistently return to their suffering and persecution within the convent because pain and obedience were the single most important defining principles

of the humanity of Christ in the Hispanic baroque as well as an essential component of power relations with the reader/confessor” (71).

In contrast, Úrsula, Chicaba, and Rosa experienced suffering and persecution at the hands of others as exploited slave bodies within their communities. While they also participated in the religious practice of self-mortification, their suffering is set apart. Their respective descriptions of *imitatio christi* reveal a relationship to their divine spouse in which they become the suffering “Wife of Christ”. I use this term in contrast to popular epithet “Bride of Christ” because I suggest the words of the subjects of my analysis reveal a mature, experienced, intimate, and tormented tone of love to describe their respective relationships to the flesh of their divine husband. In contrast, the word *bride* connotes the innocent, expecting, dutiful and idealized tone used to describe the relationship between the women who merely practiced self-inflicted suffering, either as a result of self-mortification or illness as a result of self-deprivation. A close textual analysis of Úrsula’s spiritual diary shows that she replicates the imagery of persecution as a vehicle to bond her suffering to Christ’s: this highlights her specific slave experience as an exploited, laboring body and her unique relationship with her celestial husband. Furthermore, she uses the image of jealousy as a didactic tool to understand Christ’s love. I provide a comparative textual analysis of Chicaba’s hagiographical text and Rosa’s inquisitional testimony to illustrate how they re-used the imagery of jealousy and re-articulated sensuality respectively to bond to the flesh of their divine spouse and reveal themselves as the Wife of Christ, where two become the same suffering flesh. These conventions of mystical practice, visions, self-mortification, asceticism, and

imitatio christi compose parts of the compendium of female religious practice and signals their re-invention and manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic.

Genres, Scripts, Visions and Imitatio Christi

Religious women writers of the early modern period manipulated genres, such as hagiography, and wrote spiritual diaries, spiritual biographies and spiritual autobiographies. Moreover, these women writers played with scripts. That is, they wrote their stories based on the stories of their powerful female predecessors, such as Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Ávila (McKnight 28). McKnight explains that “[t]hese *scripts* that nun writers read, lived, and rewrote in their construction of autobiographical selves are those discourses that define the subject positions . . . to which the Counter Reformation called these women” (28). Thus, women were commanded to write and to confess, but they negotiated this mandate and used the opportunity and the tradition to combat the suspicious gaze of the Counter-Reformation. As Ibsen points out “[. . .] life stories of female saints and of women imitating [the model of suffering and inner spirituality] continued to differ from their male counterparts by emphasizing a progressive movement toward sanctity revealed at an early age” (64). This childhood revelation works to combat the doubt of male clergy. For example, Chicaba’s calling came when she was younger than six and before she was captured off the West African coast. Her biographer follows in the hagiographic tradition and contests possible suspicion of Chicaba’s sanctity by highlighting her youth at the time of the divine call.

Additionally, Ibsen offers that “[m]odeled after the hagiography, the repetition of recognizable passages for other texts in the *vida serves*” to reinforce the character of the subject not her individuality. Ibsen points out that many women included or referenced

verbatim, other aspects from previous hagiographies. Terming these intertextual references as “long chain[s] of mutual influences and textual contamination” or, the “complex bricolage of hagiographic discourse”, Ibsen signals the ways in which many women employed the stories of other saintly women to bolster their own perceived sanctity. She gives the example that many of these women drew upon the *vida* of Catherine of Siena, whose *vida* had been influenced by Mary of Egypt, “herself associated . . . with Mary Magdalene” (Ibsen 66). This invocation of saintly intertextuality is also found in Rosa’s Inquisition testimony, as well as the obvious, connection with her namesake.

The claim to the supernatural power of prophetic visions is another characteristic of the individual who attempts to assert her saintly status and a signifier of the trope of the female visionary mystic. As Ibsen points out, “the use of historically verifiable facts was one way to counteract suspicions surrounding mystical experience” (67). Furthermore, Ibsen cites how *María Manuela de Santa Ana* claimed to have visions of an earthquake two years prior to its occurrence. This prophetic vision of an earthquake was reiterated by *Rosa Maria Egipcíaca* (Mott 339). Additionally, *Rosa Maria* prophesied a flood that would wash away all the sinners of Rio de Janeiro (Mott 564). However, the way in which she related this vision worked so that even if it did not “come true” it still “came true”. *Rosa Maria* related that in a vision she saw the whole of Rio swept away in a flood. However, those individuals who were housed in her *Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto* would be safe because the building would become an ark and float to safety. Incidentally (or rather not so coincidentally), this vision occurred during the monsoon season in Rio. As part of the vision, *Rosa Maria* remained outside the “Ark”,

praying in the Igreja de Santo Antonio in another religious space in her community of São Sebastião in Rio. Only her continued praying would save the city from the floods, however, if she were to turn back and look upon her beloved Recolhimento, it assured the floods and the washing away of the Carioca sinners.

This scenario is a prophetic visionary boon for Rosa. If the rains were to flood the city, then her prophetic vision would be verified. If, however, it were not to flood then it meant that Rosa's praying had worked and the city had been saved, thus bolstering her fame and perceived power. This appeal to the trope of the female visionary mystic falls into the category of what Ibsen deems the "unverifiable prophecy" because in either outcome, or in any outcome, one cannot ascertain as to whether or not the prophecy was fulfilled. Ibsen also summarizes how "unverifiable prophecy" functions within the genre of the *vida*: Many *vidas* relate the revelations in which the female religious foresees the death of an individual within the religious community (68). Again, this is similar to the vision that Rosa claimed to have experienced just hours before her spiritual confessor's passing. Both Úrsula and Chicaba reiterated these types of visions. Additionally, Ibsen suggests that "[p]redestination was a means to prove that the woman's visionary powers were divinely inspired, even though they had been granted to a weaker vessel" (65). These prophetic visions allow the Afro women of my analysis to build upon the trope of the female visionary mystic and to manipulate that trope to secure a space from which to critique their respective communities.

This visionary power is a manifestation of the bond between the saintly woman and her celestial husband. Asunción Lavrín writes that women religious received gifts from their divine spouse in the form of visions. These visions, or special favors, were

rewards for love, observance and faith. Because women were not supposed to learn theology, these visions functioned as bridges that permitted these women to understand divinity. While these visions were only to be accessible by a few, many individuals also claimed to have glimpsed these supernatural realms: "The testimonial of those who claimed to have 'witnessed' Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, and engaged in direct communication with divine entities, created a world of marvelous 'realities' that stimulated popular faith and even awed some men of the cloth" (107).

As Lavrín points out, a visionary and a mystic are not the same. She suggests that to be perceived as a mystic, a nun (or perhaps any devout religious woman) "had to prove an intensity of religious practice capable of passing the rigorous test of her own confessor and other authorities appointed by the bishop or archbishop of her diocese" (108). Lavrín states that mysticism was understood as a process of union with God that required a progressive disengagement of the world followed by the understanding of his divinity and the eventual final 'union' or experience of his presence. Lavrín cites Miguel Godínez, a doctor in mystical theology of the seventeenth century, whose instruction represents the "well established canon of his time" (108). Godínez developed ways of discerning the mystic and taught his colleagues how to recognize female mystical practice. He identified three states in this process: First, in the purgative stage, the individual "divests herself of cares and sins" (108), next, in the illuminative state, she receives understanding of God, and thirdly, in unitive ways, the final union or the transcendental experience is achieved. However, Lavrín highlights that visions are not part of the unitive stage. Furthermore, she separates the interpretation and understanding of visions into distinct categories.

Mystical visions are those that were not supposed to be experienced by the senses of the body, described by Teresa of Ávila as “no pensar nada”, but realized by the intellect, as metaphors “of the grace of God that could give a person a clue of how she stood before God” (Lavrín 108). Teresa can be seen as the great synthesizer of mystical practice for early modern women. One way to understand this role as synthesizer is the way she highlights the interdependence between the visionary and mystic traditions (Ahlgren 112). In *Teresa of Ávila and the Politics of Sanctity* (1996), Gillian Ahlgren suggests that it is Teresa’s affirmation of the vision of the Holy Trinity as a gateway to mystical union with God that symbolizes the important role visions play in mystical theology (112). Teresa wrote of the importance of the vision in the mystic union with God and drafted guidelines to help other religious women in their mystic practice. As previously stated, the intellectual vision was a key element of a mystical union experience. Another way to discern mystical practice were the presence of post-union impressions on the soul understood as the unquenchable desire to fulfill God’s expectations accompanied by the knowledge of that impossibility. For example, after a mystical union the soul has an utter disregard for itself. It is aware that it can do nothing yet seeks to do anything to serve God (Ahlgren 111).

It is difficult to assess to what degree these guidelines figured into Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s performance. While much of Teresa’s writing was widely circulated, much of it was highly criticized (Ahlgren 113). However, it may be possible to discern Teresa’s influence on Úrsula, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s in mystical visions in their employment of Tridentine imagery. Many of Rosa’s visions include images of the Trinity. Úrsula’s spiritual diary describes her visions as well and their reference to

images of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Chicaba's hagiography invokes this imagery less often, however, Paniagua describes her weekly worship practice dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

Moreover, this strict delineation and differentiation between intellectual, "no pensar nada" visions and somatic apparitions may not have been recognizable to female religious of the seventeenth and eighteenth century who looked to the proliferation of religious artifacts that inundated and typified their baroque reality for a template to understand and recreate their own expressions of divine communication. As Lavrín states, "[t]he variety of visionary experiences in seventeenth- and eighteenth- century Mexico indicates their full acceptance as venues to perceive and understand the extraterrestrial reality of Heaven or Hell" (109).

The degree to which one may be able to classify any particular vision as mystical or not, relies heavily upon the way in which this vision is recorded and retold. Lavrín summarizes the difficulties in identifying the true mystical vision. She acknowledges the differences in the disparate descriptions of the mystical visions: the female religious' own description, her male hagiographical author's description, or secondary sources and testimonies about the vision. Lavrín states, "[t]estimonials of visions written by nuns have a more intimate character, while sometimes lyrical, they lack the hyperbole found in men's writing" (109). In discussing and detailing the nature of these types of testimonials, Lavrín suggests that

the baroque nature of [these testimonials] and other male writers' texts speaks out of willful constructions, the imprint of a male vision on the female experience. They are parallel expressions in which they speak out their

imagination as triggered by the source. As men spoke for women, or on women, they were creating alternative interpretations. However, both women's visions and men's writings fit into each other to create a composite of the baroque religious imagination (109).

The subjects of my analysis fit neatly within these descriptions of testimonials of visions. Úrsula records her own experiences of her visions in her spiritual journal, Rosa's visions are documented in her Inquisition testimony. Standing in contrast to these descriptions, Chicaba's visions are recorded by her biographer, Paniagua, and illustrate the "alternative interpretation" of this African woman's slave experience.

Thus, in order to see to what degree the Afro-women of my analysis manipulate the trope of the female visionary mystic, it is important to see how their visions fall into the larger framework of divine inspiration that locates these visions within the spectrum spanning in between reality and imaginary. The divide between divine inspiration and diabolic possession is narrow. Teresa of Ávila warns against a weak constitution and a subsequent reliance on bodily sensations or visions connected to the somatic experience and emphasizes their difference from the intellectual vision:

On feeling any interior joy, their bodies being languid and weak, they fall into a slumber--they call it a spiritual sleep . . . ; the more they lose self-control, the more do their feelings get possession of them, because the frame becomes more feeble. They fancy this is a trance and call it one, but I call it nonsense (87).

Her words invite a reading that highlights the folly of permitting oneself to completely numb the senses. But at the same time, Saint Teresa's writing heralds a sharp mind that can discern the voice of God.

God speaks to the soul in another way by a certain intellectual vision which I think undoubtedly proceeds from Him; . . . It takes place far within the innermost depths of the soul which appears to hear distinctly in a most mysterious manner, with its spiritual hearing, the words spoken to it by our Lord Himself. The way in which the spirit perceives these words and the results produced by them, convince us that they cannot in any way come from the devil. Their powerful after effects force us to admit this and plainly show they do not spring from the imagination (146).

Her words foster an interpretation that suggests a reliance on the soul that heightens the senses. In this chasm between frailty of body and strength of mind collide the debates about women's religious writing during the early modern period.

In the space between what Saint Teresa of Avila describes in the former quote as spiritual sleep--a trance, a possession and nonsense--and what she depicts in the latter quote as an intellectual vision--a spiritual hearing, a perception not from the devil, and a reality (in contrast to the imaginary)--lies the scope of the literary body of women's spiritual writing. As Ibsen points out, "[m]ost descriptions of demonic possession use similar terms as the accounts of mystic union with Christ" (Ibsen 75). However, she adds that "in contrast with the sublime pain of mystic union with Christ, the devil in the vida does not seduce but assaults" (75). The distinction between sublime pain and assault results in the distinction between the saints and the sinners. However, the baroque, Counter-Reformation, Ibero-Atlantic matrix does not facilitate clear distinctions between these dichotomies. The paradoxical character of the baroque, early modern religious-scape overtly values orthodox ideals but recreates heterodox realities in the practice of

everyday life as I will outline in subsequent chapters. If Saint Teresa herself discusses such visionary phenomenon in a way that left many of her contemporary critics perplexed as to what really constitutes a vision from God, we must assume that those who followed the strokes of her pen and worked to fashion themselves and their writing in her image may just have well have struggled with understanding their own visions and from whence their inner knowledge flowed.

In his text *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism*, Moshe Sluhovsky discusses the categorization of this inner knowledge of the individual along social and religious inclinations and the expectations for understanding supernatural experiences, including mystical visions. As part of this discussion, he outlines typical religious practice for saintly women and specifically, those perceived as mystics in the early modern period. Among some of the practices typical for religious women are vocal prayer, which can be public, however, contemplative order members also practiced meditative, silent prayer. He suggests that meditative prayer was not mystical because it was under the control of the practitioner. It included a visualization of an event from Christ's life or Passion. It involved the three superior faculties: the will, the intellect and the memory (100). He also highlights a third form of prayer, known as contemplation, and suggests that only this form of prayer should be called mystical. He states that contemplative prayer is nondiscursive and nonvisual, that is not even felt and supposedly relates how the "soul stands in a state of suspension" (101). This type of mystical prayer was described in terms of "no pensar nada" by Teresa of Ávila. Sluhovsky surmises that in the final years of the seventeenth century, Carmelite

mystics developed a way to differentiate between infused contemplation and acquired contemplation. This suggests that the latter resulted from

human efforts to reach such a degree of spiritual growth that meditation loses its usefulness and leaves the practitioner unfulfilled. As such, it advances the practitioner toward the higher stage of contemplation, infused contemplation, in which divine grace will complete the spiritual ascent by bestowing infusion into the soul (Sluhovsky 101).

Importantly, Sluhovsky suggests that acquired contemplation had the advantage in that it decreased the danger of demonic temptation because during the slow learning process of contemplative prayer, the practitioner learns to discern “interior movement and resist pitfalls” (102).

Under the umbrella of meditative prayer, Sluhovsky situates the form of early modern Spanish style mental prayer called *recogimiento*. “Recollection was a technique of methodic meditation, whose goal was the gathering of the soul to a union with God by means of abandonment of attention to possible distractions” (102). During this type of prayer, an individual gathers her energies, physical, emotional and intellectual while quietly awaiting God’s grace and infusion. Sluhovsky details a discussion of *recogimiento* and *dejamiento* by summarizing the work of the Franciscan Friar Francisco de Osuna (c.1492-c.1540). Osuna’s work details the activity of recollection as “the purgation of thought, actions, speech, memory and understanding” (Sluhovsky 105). Sluhovsky affirms that this active process of recollection was emphasized to react and resist another process of internal spirituality known as *dejamiento* (106). This was seen as more complete (less regulated and therefore more potentially dangerous) form of

abandonment. This practice of the *dejados*, eventually became associated with the *Alumbrados*, which saw external acts of righteousness as meritorious but separate from the goal of unitive love (106). They felt it was possible to reach this union through complete passivity, dismissing the value of good works or church participation. “According to the *dejados*, the practitioner merely had to submit himself or herself to God” (106).

Sluhovsky questions the reality of this distinction between the orthodox practice of the *recogimiento* and the unorthodox practice of the *dejamiento*. He suggests that Osuna’s clear line between his practice of *recogimiento* and the *alumbrados*’ practice of *dejamiento* came shortly after the persecution of *alumbrados* by the Inquisition in 1525. Sluhovsky eloquently supposes that “[. . .] once we move from the general tenor of Osuna’s meditative technique to specific exercises, this boundary between the two branches of Spanish Golden Age mysticism turns out to be porous” (107). Whether practicing *recogimiento* or *dejamiento*, the focus is on creating a union with the divine. This unification began to denote a type of spiritual marriage and was expressed through a language that used this type of vocabulary to express the relationship, such as an exchange of hearts. This type of language of love used to describe the relationship between Christ and the female religious is part of the trope of the female visionary mystic. “The mystical tradition of the high Middle Ages entered even more boldly into the heart [of Jesus], and in its intensely personal, affective, somatic style, sought identification with that heart. Through the lens of the Song of Songs the medieval world gave articulation to a love affair between the heart of Jesus and the heart of the mystic spouse” (Wright 189). This focus on the body feelings as a way to understand and

experience divine love is a hallmark of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's *imitatio christi* and they use language that unites these feelings centered in the body to describe their relationship to Christ.

An exact detailing of a uniform mystical practice is beyond the scope of this project. In fact, the notion that there is such a concept as a uniform mystical practice is arguable. The salient point is that regardless of what modern readers understand and classify as aspects of female sanctity and mystical practice, what emerges in the early modern period and what typified the experiences of the women of my analysis, were fluid and porous understandings of mystical practice. These developing notions of mystical practice are similar to the developing notions about the identities of many individuals in the baroque, Counter-Reformation Ibero-Atlantic world. Significantly, the mitigating force during this time is the tension between activity and passivity. The different categorizations of prayer and practice testify to this tension. Thus, we can situate the writings of many women religious somewhere in the midst of these tensions. Whether an individual seeks out God's union through external acts and directed meditation or whether one abandons all attachments and prepares and awaits for God to give that ideal experience of divine union, can be understood through her particular *imitatio christi*.

This tension between active and passive takes on another permutation when considering the various forms of *imitatio christi* idealized and realized in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic setting. As Kathleen Myers states, "[s]uffering -- and the acceptance of it as God's will -- was the essence of the *imitatio christi* and the one path to salvation" (105). Thus, the practice of *imitatio christi* is bound up with the ideals of female sanctity. In part, for many women religious during the late Middle Ages and the

early modern period, the *imitatio christi* -- the imitation or reenactment of Christ's physical suffering -- was expressed through corporeal suffering. Moreover, this corporal suffering was perceived as the way to fuse oneself with the divine. This union was understood as a mystical marriage between the female religious and her husband, Christ. As with the understanding of the practices of *recogimiento* and *dejamiento*, and their "porous" relationship, we can read acts of *imitatio christi* as active and passive as well. For some women religious, the active process of self-inflicted pain works to establish their position as the Brides of Christ. I argue that for the Afro-women of my analysis, the passive process of suffering, as recipients of pain suffered at the hands of others, functions to establish their classification as Wives of Christ. I argue that conceiving of themselves as the Wives of Christ, they fuse themselves to his divine person and share in his suffering. His suffering at the hands of others, the suffering he does not choose freely, creates meaning for their own suffering as slaves. Furthermore, this shared suffering becomes the vehicle for these Afro-women's critique of their religiously hypocritical and exploitative slave societies. Úrsula, Chicaba's and Rosa's *imitatio christi* may be seen in at least two ways: first, their somatic language creates an image of them as Wives of Christ and second, they fuse to the body of Christ through envisioning his passive suffering, his suffering at the hands of others, as a unique link to their slave suffering, thus, creating meaning for their traumatic experiences in the early modern, Ibero-Atlantic slave society.

Tapping into the well of the tradition of women's spiritual writing (Lavrín 312), the Afro-Catholic women of my analysis enter into this discursive tension between activity and passivity. Their words reveal descriptions of frustrated bodily experiences

transcribed into words of pain as an exploited body, words of jealousy as a loving body, and counterintuitively, words of sensuality as a pleasing body. These words suggest a reading in which these women may be classified as the Wives of Christ. Their religious knowledge and their lived experiences are rooted in a unique bodily experience, which requires careful and exact surveying.

To establish their authority and testify to their own lived experiences, the female religious subjects of this chapter use the central practice of the repertoire of female sanctity -- the practice of *imitatio christi* -- to join their suffering to Christ and illustrate their ideal selves. However, their practice reinvents the practice. *Imitatio christi*, the “desire to fuse with the physical body of Christ” (Bynum 118) is a religious practice that lies at the heart of the notion of female sanctity and work in tandem with the trope of the female visionary mystic. Carolyn Walker Bynum elaborates, “[w]hen women spoke of abstinence, of eucharistic ecstasy, or curing and healing through food, they called it *imitatio Christi*. ‘Imitation’ meant union -- fusion -- with that ultimate body which is the body of Christ. The goal of religious women was thus to realize the *opportunity* of physicality. They strove not to eradicate body but to merge their own humiliating and painful flesh with the flesh whose agony, espoused by choice, was salvation” (Bynum 246). This opportunity of physicality and a merging of their own flesh to the flesh of Christ is the internalized definition of *imitatio christi* for women religious of the early modern period. Key to this traditional concept is the delimiting phrase “espoused by choice”. I argue that for Úrsula, Chicaba, and Rosa their understanding of Christ’s active suffering versus his passive suffering, his free will versus the will imposed on him

becomes the axis of their practice of *imitatio christi*. I elaborate this argument with a close reading in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

The doctrine of the Imitation of Christ was developed in the fifteenth century (Ibsen 73). As Ibsen explains, Pedro de Alcántara (1499-1562) was the textual model of ascetic perfection. Not only had Teresa of Ávila met him, but she deeply admired him as well. Pedro was reknown for his fasting, only eating every three days and once going without food for eight days. This kind of fasting is cited in almost every Hispanic religious woman's text as a "paradigm of virtue" (Ibsen 73). Interestingly, this behavior offers a unique comparison to Rosa. She took communion for eight days straight (Mott 262). Frequent communion is a motif in the lives of mystic women and became a cause of concern for religious superiors. This action may be read as a reinvention of the *imitatio christi* and an emphasis on the strengthened bond between Rosa and her spiritual husband's flesh. What I call the trope of the female visionary mystic is linked to what Ibsen terms the discourse of virtues. She explains how women participated within this discourse themselves. Moreover, "the saint's life was understood as itself an imitation of Christ, the repetition of certain patterns was an accepted and expected discursive device" (66).

Ibsen relates the influence of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* that informs how the progress toward salvation (as understood symbolically in the flesh of Christ) begins when the individual sees herself as inferior to all others, and she cites Asunción Lavirín to show the religious terms that typify the colonial period: Abstention, mortification, renunciation and humiliation (71-72). Ibsen states "persecution symbolically reenacted the martyrdom of Christ and the divine mandate to 'love your

enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Matthew 5.44)" (72). Moreover, Ibsen suggests, "the persecution motif could have had a therapeutic effect, as daily personal conflicts with other women were recast into the martyrdom of Christ and the saints" (Ibsen 72). For Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa their persecution was quite different from the kinds of persecution of white criolla female religious. I argue that the difference between the types of persecution suffered by criolla in their "personal conflicts" and daily interactions with other women religious of their own social class, and the types of persecution contrasted significantly for Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa in their religious communities. These women experienced persecution as exploited bodies of a lower, inferior, social class. However, their performance of their respective religious experiences, their mystical experiences, may have worked as a social equalizer. I suggest that Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa were aware of this contradiction. Thus, in the subsequent chapters I discuss how they used the practice of the *imitatio christi* and their suffering as a vehicle to criticize the hypocritical behavior of their religious communities. These Afro-women internalized the rhetoric that one's suffering and pain, regardless of social status, had the ability to link an individual to Christ. Thus, in their religious practice they performed the ideal so as to combat the racial discrimination they experienced within their respective social contexts.

The practice of taking communion was symbolic in many ways. Ibsen argues that the desire to fuse with Christ is realized in the Eucharistic ceremony and that by consuming Christ's body one is fused with Christ's pain (83). She suggests that "[b]ecause of this identification with Christ, pain, whether self-inflicted or brought on by illness, inscribed one's own monotonous routine into a heroic narration" (83). Ibsen

explains that a religious woman saw and described her life experiences in relation to an imitation of Christ because by understanding her own pain “she pays for her sins while on earth rather than after death” (83). Female religious engaged in self-torture and deprived themselves of food and water, resting in the nourishment of the Eucharistic wafer, not only to bring them closer to Christ’s flesh, their *imitatio christi*, but to control their own bodies. Thus, the female religious maintained control over her own body through the self-infliction of pain and deprivation of basic sustenance. These practices of self-inflicting suffering on the parts of criolla religious must have seemed eerily familiar to survivors of the Middle Passage, like Chicaba and Rosa, and the many slaves whose labor sustained the religious communities of early modern Ibero-America, like Úrsula. In the following section, first I discuss the two criolla religious women, Josefa Sebastiana and Antonia Lucia, as representatives of both an orthodox and heterodox performance of self-inflicted suffering. Second, I discuss these two criolla religious women to illustrate the contrast between their types of suffering and self-inflicted pain which typify their practice of *imitatio christi* to the type of suffering the subjects of my analysis experienced as exploited slave bodies in the Ibero-Atlantic setting.

Bodily control through self-inflicted suffering is typical for many female religious in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic setting. Sor Sebastiana Josefa de la Santisima Trinidad (1709-1757) was a Mexican criolla female religious and Chicaba’s and Rosa’s contemporary. However, her suffering carries different meanings from those of Chicaba and Rosa. Josefa Sebastiana suffered tremendously to control her body. Ibsen suggests that Sor Sebastiana’s writings illustrate the “extent to which women internalized embodied rhetoric into their discourse” (86). Her writing conforms to the genre of the

vida: Her life story begins with her birth and childhood (Ibsen 88). Beyond the use of the scripts of the genre of the spiritual autobiography, Sor Sebastiana used the tradition of the *imitatio christi* drawing on hagiographic models of women who “spoke with their bodies as a means to access power and prestige . . . as they become one with God” (Ibsen 89). Sor Sebastiana was an extreme ascetic. The accounts of her self-inflicted torture, even while weakened from illness, attest to show how she strove to submit her body and suffer in ways that she believed Christ to have suffered. Ibsen notes that her temptation to eat was her greatest trial (91). Sor Sebastiana seemed to pride herself on the fact that she basically lived on the communion wafer alone (Ibsen 91). However, “[. . .] subsisting solely on the Eucharist seems to be a practice to which women were more vulnerable” (Ibsen 82).

Starving obscured her body's feminine characteristics as she became progressively emaciated. Describing saintly women as manly has a deep history in hagiographic literature (Ibsen 92). The tradition of “effacing the feminine” became the ultimate act of humiliation and erasure of self (Ibsen 93). Sor Sebastiana takes her self-inflicted suffering to the extreme even by the standards of her own time (Ibsen 94). Sor Sebastiana's self-inflicted pain, and the ways she describes it in her writing, functions as a technique of control (Ibsen 95). Ibsen notes that “[n]arrations designed to repulse the sensibilities of the reader are common to hagiographic literature” (80) and these offenses to the readers' sensibilities highlight how the suffering woman took on the sins of the world and then purged these sins through the orifices of her body, another Christlike imitation.

Furthermore, Ibsen argues that while Sor Sebastiana conforms to the female ascetic ideal, her “public tortures transgress the boundaries of the enclosed space of her body, inscribing a corporeal discourse that denotes excess” (95). Ibsen concludes her commentary on the life of Sor Sebastiana surmising that “by inscribing her pain within the representational system of her confessor/addressee, a system that eroticized, objectified, and sometimes even demonized the female body, she ironically relegated herself to silence and isolation” (96). Lavrín asserts that this pain and suffering was accepted without question as a way of imitating Christ’s own suffering (178). Note, that for the criolla Sor Sebastiana, her specific form of *imitatio christi* facilitated her control of her own body. Using models from the hagiographic narrative, she reconstructed her own suffering experience to fuse herself with Christ. While her fusion with Christ brought her closer to the ideal mystic experience, at the same time, this subject-position as an ascetic female religious became representative of her identity, which as Ibsen points out, relegated her to silence and isolation.

Rather than suffering in silence and isolation, Madre Antonia Lucia del Espiritu Santo (1646-1709) became a public figure and founder of two *beaterios* -- “relatively informal” religious house for single or widowed women -- that fashioned their own habits (Jaffary 84), in colonial Lima, Peru. She is another example of a criolla religious woman and contemporary of Úrsula and Chicaba. Antonia Lucia envisioned a unique form of *imitatio christi* as a means to control her own body. She, like Josefa Sebastiana, entered into the masculine space in order to exercise control over her body. Using the masculine space as well as the mystical space she established her authority to cross-dress and imitate Christ, not only in word and deed, but also in dress (Arenal and Schlau 304). Her

confessor Fray Blas Suares recounts the details of her vision in which Christ cuts her hair, adorns her with a tunic similar to his own, and places a rope around her neck and a crown of thorns on her head. She claimed she awoke from her vision dressed accordingly (Arenal and Schlau 304). This garb became not only her uniform in her effort to establish her own beaterio but the required outfit of all community members (Arenal and Schlau 305). This *imitatio christi* was her way to symbolize her unification with Christ's pain. It functioned to underscore her control over her own body. "It also authorized her 'deviance' from conventional women's roles, which in turn enabled her to set in motion variation on orthodox ritual" (Arenal and Schlau 305).

In addition to providing an example of manipulation of convention, or highlighting her own performance, a rearticulation of an orthodox dress-code, the construction of Antonia Lucia story demonstrates a reworking of the hagiographic genre. The life and the words of Antonia Lucia come to the reader via the construction of her "text" by another writer nun, Madre Josefa de la Providencia, Antonia Lucia's spiritual daughter. Arenal and Schlau state that Espiritu Santo's biography, which came together in part from sermons and eulogies printed in pamphlet form, was mainly authored and edited by Madre Josefa (307). Arenal and Schlau write, "it captures lives and times in progress and rehearses the maneuvers involved in piecing together a book" (307). Additionally, Ibsen points out that "the inclusion of hagiographic narrative further challenges boundaries of discursive authority through a complicated network of mutual contaminations that underscore the role of the author as reader" (63). The way in which this text was constructed exemplifies the performance and transformation of the lived experiences of Espiritu Santo into the perfect experiences associated with her subject

position as mystical visionary, as well as, the active work of narrative construction to author a story which functions to change the perceptions of its readers. Thus, in the story of this religious woman's life, we read the ways both the author and the subject draws from aspects of the trope of the female visionary mystic and appeals to the ideal for female sanctity to exert control over her own body and highlight the ways in which religious women played with scripts to refashion their unique stories.

In the case of Josefa Sebastiana, her orthodox attempt to fuse her flesh and suffering to Christ, her *imitatio christi*, functions through her provocation of her own illness. In order for her to actively unify herself to Christ, she used her body as a vessel to take on the sins of the world, much like Christ. "The representation of health and illness is common to the hagiographic narrative of an ascetic or moral type . . . and . . . is particularly exploited in the lives of female saints" (Ibsen 77). However, as Ibsen further notes that while a lifelong illness is characteristic of the female vida, "associating physical pain over which [the female religious] had no control with the suffering of Christ endowed it with meaning" (78). Moreover, "the perceived connectedness between illness and agony is a common motif in women's life narratives" (78). However, it is difficult to separate the notion of "no control" over one's illness when often the onset of illness was consequent to the chosen ascetic, self-depriving and mortifying lifestyle. Thus, while Josefa Sebastiana's *imitatio christi* illustrates her active attempt to fuse her body with Christ, it also signals her control over her own body. Consequently, her suffering may be read as distinct from the kinds of suffering that are more akin to Christ's suffering as a passive body. Antonia Lucia's heterodox performance of a cross-dressing female religious illustrates her active process in attempting to fashion herself as

one that incorporates Christ's suffering. She brings about her unification with his pain. She dons the masculine garb to locate herself as the object of persecution and torment. This is distinct from Christ's suffering as a passive recipient of the torments and persecutions of others.

The self-inflicted starvation of Josefa Sebastiana is striking when compared to the starvation experienced by both Chicaba and Rosa Maria as victims of the Middle Passage. Thus, one may read Josefa Sebastiana's suffering through self-deprivation as a hopeful desire to create a suffering that would please her bridegroom. This signals an almost naive expectation that one would expect from a bride hoping that her suffering would please her betrothed. Additionally, Antonia Lucias's dressing as Christ may be read as an eager attempt to bind her identity to that of her beloved, holy fiancé, Christ. I suggest that the ways in which these women related to Christ's suffering experience, their forms of *imitatio christi*, reveal an interpretation of their respective relationships to Christ as novice and innocent, much like the experience of a bride, and stand in contrast to the ways in which the subjects of my analysis, Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa express their *imitatio christi*. These images foster a reading of their words as the words of the Wives of Christ.

In Chicaba's hagiography, her biographer, Father Juan Carlos Miguel de Paniagua, writes "[f]ine love has certain element of jealousy that is both a faithful proclaimer of how active this volcano is and serves as a harbinger of the most intense affection" (Houchins and Fra-Molinero 237). Paniagua frames the jealousy Chicaba experiences by suggesting that her Master (Christ) was jealous when Chicaba invited some visiting religious men to see her cell (Houchins and Fra-Molinero 237). In chapter

29 of the *Compendio*, Paniagua records Chicaba's own words to describe her response to the scenario:

Yo sin reparo de hazerlo por mal, los traxe, a que vieran la Celda, y no crea V.R. que es mentira, se enojó tanto su Majestad, y una reprehension llevé del Señor, que me hizo llorar; y estaba tan corrida interiormente, que para comulgar, llegaba con una vergüenza tan grande, que toda me cubría de sudor: y cierto no lo hice con mala intención, ni por disgustar a su Majestad; ni en todos aquellos días sabia, que hazerme; a la Virgen Santissima supliqué, hiziesse las amistades, y la conté la falta en que yo havia caído sin reparo, y parece, que mi corazón sentía algún consuelo (95).

Drawing on this experience, Chicaba pours her emotion of jealousy into her writing, composing poetry to give voice to her love for Christ. As Paniagua writes, “[. . .] jealousy made her exclaim spontaneously the following verses” (Houchins and Fra Molinero 237).

Ay, Jesús de mi alma/dónde te has ido/que pare no vienes/y te has perdido/Ay,
Jesús ¿qué diré yo?/si os vais con otras/¿que haré yo?/Clamaré, lloraré/hasta ver a
Dios/y si no, y si no/morir de amor/Y ya lo dio/pues estoy tan sola/que no has
venido/Y si estás con otra/yo lo he visto;/a Maria y Marta/las has querido ¡Ay,
Jesús!/dónde te hallaré yo/pues tan tonta me tiene/cuando te tengo:/Adiós, adiós,
amor,/adiós, Señor/adiós, corazón/no más, no más/no más (Houchins and Fra
Molinero 237).

Chicaba writes in her poetry of her love for Christ, she questions his absence, she questions what she can say, she wonders what she will do if He goes out with other

women, and she affirms that her jealousy is founded because she has seen it before employing the example of Jesus's divided time spent with Martha and Mary, she admits that when she is with him she feels silly or giddy, almost like a schoolgirl's crush, to use a modern simile.

Chicaba's desire to fuse with the physical body of Christ, her specific *imitatio christi*, is motivated by her love for her Divine Spouse. In describing her lover, Christ, her language has a very sensual and erotic tone.

De manera que es dolor grande cuando tengo el corazón sereno y quieto. Es ardor cuando el afecto sube con exceso a desear el cumplir con las obligaciones que debo; y no digo bien, que no es exceso lo que es razón. Me abraso, me quemo, diera voces, pero las doy dentro de mi (Houchins and Fra Molinero 238).

This erotic and sensual language draws on the trope of the female visionary mystic. Many women religious mystic writers' descriptions of their passion for Christ bordered on the erotic and the sensual: "[T]he religious experience of medieval and early modern women mystics is often regarded as intrinsically erotic" (Miller 25). However, Chicaba's erotic tone suggests a relationship to Christ that is more analogous to that of a wife than a bride.

While Chicaba uses an erotic tone to convey her passion for Christ and her desire to fuse with his physical body, her use of jealous language functions to narrate her desire to possess Christ. One can read this desire to possess Christ as an inversion of her slave experience. The words employed to express the desire for Christ might be similar from one mystic to another, but the lived experiences within which those words are spoken suggest that they take on a different meaning, especially in the context of explicit

complaints of discrimination, as is the case with Chicaba. She became a possession of the Spanish empire as a slave body. To rectify this trauma, she inverts the language of love, specifically the erotic mystical rhetoric, to illustrate her desire to possess Christ's love. This reading offers a critique of her racially stratified society. She uses her position as a Wife of Christ to exert control over the relationship with Christ: to compensate for the way in which Christ's divine hand snatched her from the beach as a child and stole her away from her land, she desires to possess Him.

This use of the frustrated language of jealousy and the dynamics of possession are of note in Úrsula's words as well. Úrsula's mystic visions employ images of jealousy as a didactic tool and vehicle to understand Christ's love. Úrsula describes an instance when her voices asked her to commend the spirit of a morena to God. She was surprised that this woman had been in purgatory for such a long time "for the things she did" (van Deusen 88). Úrsula writes:

the voices led me to understand that she had illicitly loved a nun and the entire convent knew about it, but that my father, Saint Francis, and my mother, Saint Clare, had gotten down on their knees and prayed to our Lady to secure the salvation of that soul from her Son. That is because she had served His house in good faith. Later, almost in front of me, I saw a crown of large thorns being lowered from heaven, suspended by a ribbon. I could not tell how many there were, maybe sixty or so . . . I saw the morena again . . . the voices told me that she did her penance . . . and I now saw her in human form, wearing a green skirt and a head scarf. The morena explained that she was there because of the tremendous mercy God had shown her . . . Within myself, I asked, "How, and why so much

time in purgatory?" She told me that God loves His wives so much that when He sees them fail to carry out their duties, He feels it deeply, just as husbands do when their wives are unfaithful (van Deusen 88).

Úrsula's words foster a reading in which she interprets God's jealousy, his deep feelings, about his wives' betrayals as a sign of love. Úrsula's description of the suffering of the morena for her sins, not necessarily the fact that she illicitly loved a nun but that the entire convent knew about it. Úrsula uses the imagery of the crown of thorns to highlight the shared suffering between the penitent morena and Christ. Thus, Christ authorizes, or crowns, the morena's redemption through the unification of their suffering in an inverted image of a wedding ceremony. Instead of wearing a crown of flowers, which was the customary ritual for novices during their coronation when they took their vows and became brides of Christ, various crowns of thorns suspended from ribbons adorn this redemption ceremony which returns the penitent morena to human form wearing a colorful outfit of red and green. When Úrsula inquires as to the meaning of this morena's extended suffering, she is informed that it is Christ's love expressed through jealousy that redeems, crowns, restores and dresses this faithful hard working morena. This expression of frustrated love may signal Úrsula's frustration over her own suffering as an exploited slave and laborer in the convent. She uses this language of jealousy to describe the ways in which she envisions Christ, her husband, as redeemer and jealous lover. While this vision relates the image of Christ's ceremonial coronation/redemption of the morena, because the voices inform that Christ is jealous over his wives, we may read this as a didactic lesson for the ways in which He loves her as well. Thus, we may read the morena as a proxy for Úrsula and the image of the multiple crowns of thorns may

represent the multiple wives of Christ, including Úrsula herself. This jealous frustrated language may be read to describe Úrsula as a Wife of Christ and describe the ways she understands her union with her divine spouse fused by their shared passive suffering in the placement of the crown of thorns.

Rosa's words are different from Úrsula's and Chicaba's in that her union to Christ is celebrated with the language of frustrated sensual love rather than the language of frustrated jealous love. However, her *imitatio christi* is similar to Úrsula's and Chicaba's because it reveals Rosa's expressions as a Wife of Christ and her words also reveal an embodied unification with the suffering of Christ. She uses the frustrated language of love and sensual imagery to represent herself as the sustaining, pleasurable, and nourishing experience that Christ offers in the communion experience. Rosa reinvents this aspect of the trope of the female visionary mystic and describes herself as the nourishing banquet hostess and uses sensual imagery as a vehicle to fuse her body to Christ. Specifically, her inquisitional testimony describes her own body as analogous to the nourishing body of Christ. In the last portion of her inquisition testimony, she describes how at the moment she received communion she heard a voice emanate from the host and describe Rosa herself as the Hostess and Holy Banquet Attendant.

da hóstia que estava para comungar acrescentou as palavras seguintes =Tu serás a Abelha mestra Recolhida na cortiço do amor, fabricareis doce favo de mel para pores na Mesa do cedo celestial banquetiador, para sustento, e alenta dos seus amigos convidados= (ANTT, Processo. 9065 fol. 38r-v).

This invocation of food imagery signifies Rosa's *imitatio christi* and illustrates her frustrated language of love. It may be read as the fusing of the marital flesh, which

underscores the woman's role to nourish while at the same time conflating this role with the presence of Christ's flesh embodied in the Holy Communion wafer, which nourishes the Catholic faithful. Thus, we may interpret that Rosa regards her own role of "nourishing" her friends and invitees as facilitating the consumption of Christ's body. In the process, Rosa transforms the male host to female hostess, unifying her flesh with Christ's. Her words permit a reading in which she does not distinguish between her body and the body of Christ: these are not dichotomous but synonymous symbols. Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that women writers "drew from the tradition a notion of the female as physical an emphasis on their own redemption by Christ who was supremely physical because supremely human . . . Subsuming the male/female dichotomy into the more cosmic dichotomy divine/human, women saw themselves as the symbol for all humanity" (263). Rosa's visions conform to the mystical tradition of the female body as nurturing and redeeming. These visions unite the value of food as basic sustenance with spiritual sustenance. The language used food imagery with a sensual tone to describe how Rosa's body would nourish her followers. Thus, we may read Rosa's reassessment of the nourishing value of Christ's flesh inseparable from her own flesh, Christ's wife's flesh, as a reinvention of the *imitatio christi* and a manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic. Rosa's sensual language replete with food imagery may be read in contrast to her criolla counterparts because of her unique experiences of food deprivation during the trauma of the Middle Passage and her experience as a prostitute and slave in Minas Gerais.

Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's use of the language of frustrated erotic, jealous and sensual love, which creates a reading of their *imitatio christi* as Wives of Christ, may

be read in an additional way. Their suffering as Wives of Christ is one form of their suffering, but as previously outlined, their suffering was passive as enslaved bodies in the Ibero-Atlantic world versus the active suffering criolla and European women religious employed to link themselves to Christ's flesh. The consequences of this self-inflicted suffering are eerily similar to the experiences of victimized bodies and survivors of the slave system. Ibsen comments that "a woman's corporeal pain was . . . inextricably linked to an expression of identity before the eyes of her confessor/reader" (84). She summarizes that a religious woman really only had control over her own body. Thus, she worked to use her body and her suffering to link herself to Christ. Ibsen cites Jean Franco and suggests, "the hagiographic model provided a story in which a woman could imagine herself as heroine, thus, constructing a narrative that places herself and the center of the story (84). Moreover, as Nancy Van Deusen notes with reference to Úrsula, she experienced her social position through her body (52). Van Deusen argues that from Úrsula's writings emerges a "corporeal 'identity' of a strong female laborer (whose body was not her own) [that] contrasted with contemporary hagiographic 'ideals' of spiritual femininity that sought to efface the beauty and and sensuality of the physical" (52). Thus, Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's descriptions of pain diverge from the traditional mystical discourse and add another dimension to the lived experiences of Afro-descendant women in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic discursive space. Their recreated practices, in which they use the trope of the female visionary mystic to construct a corporeal identity as the Wives of Christ, facilitate a transformation from slave to mystic.

Theoretical Underpinning

To explain how these recreated practices are linked to the trope of the female visionary mystic, I apply the concept of nodal points. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe suggest “[. . .] the category of *point de capiton* [nodal point] or master-signifier involves the notion of a particular element assuming a ‘universal’ structuring function within a certain discursive field [. . .] without the particularity of the element *per se* predetermining such function” (xi). Each religious practice, mental prayer, fasting, self-flagellation, prophetic visions, and many of the other religious behaviors and abilities traditionally associated with the female visionary mystic, can be understood as nodal points. By placing these specific practices into certain categories, such as pious, devout, blessed, or revered, they come to signify more than the basic practice itself alone can represent. These categories of exemplary religious behaviors and abilities work to construct an ideal, or universal, within the discourse of what it means to be a female visionary mystic. Importantly, these categories, or nodal points, do not in-and-of-themselves determine the classification as mystical practice but only in their relationship to the other categories do they come to have meaning within the discourse.

For example, independently Sor Úrsula’s specific behaviors and abilities: wearing a hair-shirt, practicing self-flagellation, healing the sick, experiencing mystical visions and communicating with the souls of purgatory, do not constitute a mystical identity in themselves. It is the dependent and interrelated nature of these various signifiers that function in concert to signal her identity as a female visionary mystic. I understand the typical and revered practices of the female religious, as outlined in hagiographical narratives and disseminated in aural, oral and literary culture, each to signify a particular

element or aspect of the female visionary mystic identity. While each attribute or behavior does not constitute or determine the mystical identity, so to speak, they work together, like bricks and mortar, to construct a conceptual ideal, or rather, the mystical status.

The concept of nodal points is useful to theorize how Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa Maria constructed their respective identities. This identity construction is tethered to their respective manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic. Ultimately, this manipulation of the trope reveals their respective negotiations of their respective subject positions. What I am attempting to illustrate is the relationship between the “[. . .] macro- ‘discourses’ and micro-levels of interaction” (43). This is the aim of positioning theory. As outlined in Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoeand’s *Discourse and Identity*,

Positioning theorists examine the co-construction of identity between speaker and audience. ‘Positioning’ refers to the process through which speakers adopt, resist and offer ‘subject positions’ that are made available in discourse or ‘master narratives’. For example, speakers can position themselves (and others) as victims or perpetrators, active or passive, powerful or powerless and so on. [. . .] [Positioning theory] posits an intimate connection between subject positioning (that is, identity) and social power relations” (43).

Using the example from the beginning of this chapter in which Úrsula metaphorically relates her social position to that of the stone, modern day readers of her spiritual diary become aware of her corporeal identity construction. Úrsula, the speaker (or writer in this case using the first person voice) adopts the subject position of the

obedient and submissive female religious in the master-narrative, or what I call here the trope of the female visionary mystic, which is inextricably linked to early modern discourse of female sanctity. Through her articulation of her awareness of her need to submit and suffer the authority of others, she identifies with the emotionless stone. However, then she repositions herself by questioning the utility and value of this stone. The allusions to God as the rock and Christ as the foundation are so obvious they seem cliché. She repositions herself as powerful as opposed to powerless by drawing on the implied and ubiquitous references to God as the rock and Christ as the cornerstone: “*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he*” (Deuteronomy 32:4, KJV); “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]*” (Ephesians 2:20, KJV). Furthermore, her self-equation with the stone reveals her positioning within the Catholic master-narrative.

In chapters three, four and five, I elaborate a discussion of these women’s respective constructions of their respective identities through their unique re-positioning of themselves within the trope of the female visionary mystic. What I offer here is an explanation of how the words of the women of my analysis may be read so as to illustrate their respective unique corporeal identity constructions linked to their suffering as slaves and their somatic union with their divine husband, Christ. To become mystics, they linked themselves to the trope of the female visionary mystic and manipulated the ideal of female sanctity in the early modern, Ibero-Atlantic world. Thus, when we use the term nodal points in conjunction with positioning theory and then apply those understandings along with Max Weber’s theoretical framework and his explanation of ideal types, we

begin to see the interrelated nature of the discourse of female sanctity, the hagiographic genre and women's writing in the early modern period, so as to structure the significance of what I call the trope of the female visionary mystic. Ultimately, what emerges is a way of understanding how these disparate permutations of a uniform, orthodox, standard practice, such as the *imitatio christi*, functioned, in part, as a vehicle for the transformation from the downtrodden, inferior, social status of slave to the revered, superior, social status of mystic in Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's lived experiences.

Conclusion

Chicaba, Úrsula and Rosa Maria's words work as re-purposed stones in their respective and individualized constructions of their corporeal identities in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic matrix. Their diverse narratives, the hagiography, the spiritual diary and the Inquisition testimony, render a reading in which their words transform their respective slave experiences into ideal experiences by drawing on and re-framing the trope of the female visionary mystic. These women drew on the traditions of female sanctity developed and employed by previous female religious mystics to convert their lived slaves experiences into ideal female religious mystic experiences. Their words invite a reading in which they rearticulated the practice of *imitatio christi*, their unification with Christ through suffering, as a means to convert their ascribed status in their racially and socially stratified societies. By likening and linking themselves to Christ in this fashion, these Afro-womens' words construct an ideal type. These women's words suggest a corporeal identity construction as the Wife of Christ. In contrast to the ways in which Josefa Sebastiana and Antonia Lucia perform their own *imitatio christi* with the vehicles of dress or pain from a self-invoked illness or self-infliction, such as

fasting and self-mortification, the Afro-women religious upon which this dissertation focuses, not only experience illnesses and self-inflicted pains similar to their criolla contemporaries but, additionally, they experience the pain of slavery and the traumatic experiences of bodily harm and deprivation associated with that condition. The control over one's own body becomes the point of departure in the discussion about the differences in the ways these Afro-women produce their narratives and sheds new light onto the discussion of their written and oral performances. Consequently, much of the pain that they experience was beyond their control. Thus, their writings suggest a reading in which their *imitatio christi* works to heal or justify the pain and trauma experienced as slaves and exploited bodies in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic world, and link their respective passive experiences of suffering to the ideal passive suffering of Christ.

As Úrsula describes in her spiritual diary in 1650, her sufferings were expected to be endured without complaint. She was expected to know her place and submit to her religious and societal superiors. She was expected to remain silent. Úrsula understood these expectations and instead of living up to them, she transcended them. Her words became her bricks. These bricks functioned as tools of construction and destruction. She used the powerful imagery of stone to build and support her own corporeal identity, as a well laid, body and soul. Her words also worked as well-aimed stones to breakdown the images of those around her. In her self-description as a well-placed brick, she links herself to Christ and criticizes others who are weak, those loosely placed bricks. Through the metaphor of the stone, her words suggest an interpretation in which her flesh has become one with Christ, her spiritual husband. Together through her mystical marriage to Christ, their union consecrated by their shared experience as

passive, exploited and suffering bodies, Úrsula's body and soul was fortified. Her unique *imitatio christi* becomes the foundation of her path to upward mobility, religiously and socially. Her words reveal a reinvention of female sanctity and a manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic. Her words of pain and her reiteration of the image of jealousy illustrate a mature and experienced comprehension of her relationship to her divine spouse. Thus, her words, once broken down, furnish a deconstruction of her identity as a Bride of Christ and a reconstruction of it as the Wife of Christ.

CHAPTER THREE: A FAMOUS SERVANT OF GOD -- Remembering Úrsula de Jesús
and Her Transformation from Slave of Man to *Sierva de Dios*

Úrsula de Jesús was born in early modern Lima, Peru in 1604. As the daughter of a slave, her ascribed status was also that of a slave. However, when Úrsula died in 1666 she had achieved within the walls of her convent and the walls of her city the status of free woman, a religious *donada* -- one who donates herself to the service of God -- and a revered mystic. Úrsula was remembered as a remarkable *negra* for her unforgettable religious performance: she walked with God and she talked with God in the tradition of her famous foremothers Clare of Assisi, Saint Gertrude and Catherine of Siena. Yet, Úrsula's spiritual path was not as well paved as the paths walked by these icons of religious perfection. Besides having to overcome the "bigfooted one", the Devil who routinely plagued all truly saintly mystical women, Úrsula had to surmount the prejudices of her own racially stratified community. Drawing on the repertoire of female sanctity, she used her body as a performance space to reinvent herself and alter the way she would be remembered. This memory of Úrsula as a religious mystic persists in the cultural memory of religious Lima.

In 1924, celebrating centennial Peruvian independence, Ismael Portal published his book *Lima Religiosa, 1535-1924*. He constructs his narrative as a walking tour of Lima, using the first person plural, inviting the reader to meet those along the way, employing the classical tradition of didactic narrative. Portal provides a step-by-step guide of the city; he asks those he meets to explain the history of the various images and artifacts he encounters in this exhibit-like expedition of the Lima's religious history.

It is along this path that we encounter the memory of Úrsula de Jesús. Inside the Santa Clara Monastery, guided by the Abbess and her secretary, we come upon a framed portrait of a black religious woman. Portal describes this encounter through a conversation with the Abbess. Upon inquiring about the history of the portrait, the Abbess replies:

[. . .] Hubo aquí una negrita, Úrsula, en los primeros tiempos del monasterio, que fué una verdadera sierva de Dios. Una noche estaba, solita, adorando arrodillada en el suelo, a este Crucifijo, y de pronto al retirarse, tuvo la idea de besarle una mano. lo cual era imposible por la distancia que la separaba. Pero, cuán intensa sería su emoción al ver que el Señor, desclavando la derecha, se la acercó a los labios. Atónita la buena mujer, exclamó: ‘Señor mio! soy yo Santa Catalina o Santa Gertrudis? . . .’ ---*Lo hice con ellas y puedo hacerlo contigo*--fué la respuesta (Portal 153).

The Abbess’s story highlights the ways in which Úrsula is remembered within her religious community and it underscores the conventions Úrsula used to construct her mystic identity and her local fame: she used the rhetoric of humility and concession; she questioned her worthiness by claiming that she is not Catherine of Siena or Saint Gertrude; she deployed the conventions of the trope of the female visionary mystic, she saw and spoke with the Godhead. In her vision, Christ miraculously stretches out his wounded hands for her to kiss and responds to her humble question affirming that, in His eyes, she is equal to these powerful predecessors and revered female saints.

The emphasis the Abbess places on remembering Úrsula, first as black and second as a true servant of God, frames Úrsula’s fame. Úrsula’s renown as a mystic links

her to Saint Catherine and Saint Gertrude. History, for all intents and purposes, has thoroughly bonded Úrsula's story to the stories of other (white) female visionary mystics because she is remembered alongside these iconic female saints. Significantly, Úrsula's memory is related through a conversation between Portal and the Abbess. The conversation between Portal and the Abbess highlights the significance of orality in the construction of social memory.

The dialogue between Portal and the Abbess, and the parallel relationship between Portal's text and its reader, signals Úrsula's fame. She constructed her identity as a mystic through both oral and written practice. Conventual life for women in the early modern Ibero-religious space combined the medieval practice of oral, collective reading with the modern practice of silent reading (Weber 102). Moreover, words like "hear and read", "listeners and readers" and "write and say" were understood as synonymous (Frenk cited in Weber 102). These practices functioned to form and reform perceptions. The shifting, or change, in perception, is an integral aspect of performance. The purpose of performance is to alter the viewer's or audience's opinion about the performer and what she is rearticulating. As noted in chapter two, Úrsula's practices, both oral and written, can be read as performance because they functioned to alter the way in which she was perceived. The way in which she wrote about her worth, her continual self-denigrating language, her practice of communion, continual kneeling and worship, her working and laboring in the convent, her recount of mystical visions and voices, her confusion over the origins of her visions, and her prayer and dedication to the healing of others are just some of the ways in which she performed the role of the visionary mystic. Whether for her confessor, the other nuns, the other slaves or Spanish-

descended members of her community, Úrsula performed to change how people viewed her. Her performances furnished her transformation from slave subject to mystic agent. These performances secured Úrsula's place in the social and cultural memory of religious Lima.

Moreover, she used her body as a performance space to construct her cultural memory. Through a close reading of Úrsula's spiritual journal, this chapter highlights the ways in which Úrsula's textual production fosters a reading in which she manipulates the trope of the female visionary mystic so as to transform her ascribed slave status to the achieved status of mystic. In this process of transformation, Úrsula generates social agency: she replicates Catholic rhetoric and re-invents the repertoire of female sanctity so as to highlight her suffering as a laboring body and an exploited enslaved person. Úrsula's story, her writing and her work as a true servant of God, set her apart and distinguish her from other women, slave and free, white and black in her early modern Limeña society. She contrasts her work as God's servant with the lackadaisical behavior of the white nuns of her convent. Moreover, Úrsula's emphasis on work and labor as integral to worship may be read as part of her Afro-Catholic practice. Yorùbá religious practice intimately links religious worship to manual labor and toil. Úrsula's uses her Palm Sunday mystical vision, to reframe her belief of work as worship. She emphasizes the role of labor and work as worship and perceives work as integral to salvation. Úrsula's visions become the backdrop for her critique of her religiously hypocritical community and exploitative society. Within the performance space of her mystical visions, Úrsula intertwines Yorùbá cosmological imagery with baroque Catholic

ideology. Úrsula's visions may be interpreted as syncretic, revealing her Afro-Catholic voice.

Úrsula: A Brief Biography

Nancy van Deusen fleshes out Úrsula's biography in her text *The Souls of Purgatory* (2004). Úrsula was fathered by Juan de Castilla and mothered by the criolla slave Isabel de los Ríos. It is most likely that Isabel was from the Congo-Angola region of Africa. Both Úrsula and her mother were slaves of Jerónima de los Ríos, but around 1612 Úrsula went to work in the household of the famous Limeña mystic Luisa Melgarejo de Soto. It was common practice for some owners to rent out their slaves to other individuals, usually those that formed part of their social network. Úrsula remained in the employ of Melgarejo until the age of twelve when she entered the Convent of Santa Clara as a slave to Inés del Pulgar, Jerónima's niece (van Deusen 3).

What knowledge Úrsula gleaned while laboring in Melgarejo's household cannot be known with certainty. However, as previously explained, Lima was a diverse, multicultural, multiethnic and transcultural space. The diffusion of knowledge and various heterodox daily practices were circulated in a multi-directional fashion. In Lima, various kinds of knowledge and practices co-mingled and congealed. For example, African peoples' cultural praxis was diverse (O'Toole 20) and was contoured by contact with indigenous Peruvian practices and ideologies (Osorio 200). Overarchingly, diverse Catholic practices permeated the early modern Limeña cultural space resulting from conflicting ideologies developing during the baroque Counter Reformation:

La Edad Moderna se abría a la Iglesia como un tiempo de contradicción entre las reformas intra eclesiales que habían protagonizado muchos órdenes . . . las

reformas que rompieron con la catolicidad y los procesos de reconstrucción conocidos bajo el concepto de la Contrarreforma . . . en el que las experiencias místicas de encuentro y significación se auto-censuraron, y se institucionalizaron las diversas formas de vida religiosa . . . (Martínez i Álvarez 31).

Many slaves and freed blacks living and working in Lima were impacted by both orthodox and heterodox Catholic practice of *peninsulares*, white *criollos* and other religious individuals living in Lima during this baroque encounter between Spaniards, indigenous Peruvians and African and Afro-peruvian peoples. Transcultural contact became the backdrop for the construction of new identities. As discussed in chapter one, this new identity construction, or ethnogenesis, outlines the emergence of a new identity that continuously negotiates its subject positions. This negotiation of the “flashpoints” of social difference for African and Afro-descendant individuals in early modern Catholic baroque Lima can be understood as hybrid Afro-Catholic identity construction.

The first few decades of the seventeenth-century in Lima could be described as a Three Ring Catholic Circus: Debates about the *Extripación de la idolatría* were tossed about the streets and the Limeña people were captivated and enthralled by the mystical feats of Rose of Lima. The populace stampeded through the streets on her death in March of 1617. Their fervor did not dissipate. After her passing, the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition, acting as Ringmaster, directed the peoples’ gaze to the main ring attraction: in Lima, various *autos de fe* were performed in the city center. Like stunt-oriented artists, Catholic inquisitors costumed in brilliant regalia displayed acts of violence and intimidation as they juggled to keep control of the plebe. The Catholic Church, scared about losing its grip on the masses, took to terror and fear tactics to tame

the rabble hordes. Ultimately, however, it gave in to the populace and began a metaphorical tightrope act during the long process of Rose of Lima's beatification, which was completed in 1667 (Graziano 117). This intense period of prolonged religious performance -- the repetition and replication of Catholic practice with the expressed purpose of capturing and controlling popular perceptions -- unfolded over the course of Úrsula's life. One can imagine the kind of gossip that mesmerized Úrsula's religious community when her former owner Melgarejo was tried by the Inquisition (Graziano 114).

Úrsula spent twenty-eight years of her life as a convent slave. Relegated to menial domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning, she forged relationships with various members of her religious society. Importantly, these relationships were marked by asymmetrical power differentials. In 1642, she had a life altering experience when she slipped and almost fell into a well while she was hanging her skirt out to dry: she had loaned it out and was miffed that it had been returned soiled. Her prayers to the Virgin of Carmen allowed her to regain her foothold (van Deusen 3). From that moment on, she dedicated herself to spiritual work and continued her laborious work schedule as a domestic slave to Inés de Pulgar. Úrsula's dedication to the cultivation of her spiritual self, did not sit well with her owner who believed that Úrsula was not putting in a full day's work. In an effort to remedy this situation, Úrsula intended to procure a different owner. Worried about losing Úrsula to a life outside the convent, another nun purchased Úrsula's freedom in 1645. However, Úrsula did not profess and become a *donada* until 1647. Van Deusen discusses Úrsula's conflict about remaining in the convent. Her introduction to Úrsula's spiritual journal, as well as her article ""The Lord Walks Among

the Pots and Pans’: Religious Servants in Colonial Lima”, outlines the racial and class tensions that typified the lives of religious *donadas*. As van Deusen points out, Úrsula was most likely wary that her freedom would not impact her daily reality in the convent and that she would still be exploited and subjected to an extreme and abusive work load; and importantly, that she would still be perceived as a slave.

However, signs from God and encouragement from a young black novice for the status of *donada* motivated Úrsula to accept the position and profess as a *donada* in June of 1647 (van Deusen 5). The year leading up to her profession, she gained the reputation as an extremely pious individual. She performed all the requisite actions of the repertoire of female sanctity: fasting, general confession, flagellation, penance and self-mortification: she wore a hair shirt, a crown of thorns and the cilice. During this year she studied and prepared for her vows. She was ordered to write down her visions by her confessor before she professed. Van Deusen highlights that her “regular” diary entries replicated hagiographic and medieval mystic discourse. However, van Deusen signals that Úrsula’s “irregular” entries in her journal were recorded between the years of 1650 and 1661 (5). In her spiritual journal, Úrsula wrote of her visions and the souls of purgatory that visited her pleading for intercession. She described the voices she heard of clergy and slaves that had passed over, and she recorded the conversations she had with Christ.

Úrsula died “the good death” in February of 1666 with her eyes open. Many important individuals attended her funeral including the *vicereine* (1661-1666), doña Ana de Silva y Manrique, and many high ecclesiastical and secular authorities (van Deusen 5). Úrsula’s body was buried beneath the floor of the chapel in her convent of Santa

Clara. Úrsula became a source of inspiration and a role model of religious practice for the members in her religious community.

Her life of labor and religious servitude need to be understood in the context of the religious milieu of the early modern baroque Catholic Limeña landscape. Following in the footsteps of Portal and van Deusen, this chapter traces Úrsula's literary path to offer an interpretation of Úrsula's words as signposts on her own journey of transformation: referencing a metaphor that Úrsula herself used, this chapter reads Úrsula's words as bricks that she used to construct her own pathway to becoming a revered servant of God.

Methodology: Tactics, Repertoire, Scenarios and Creating Social Memory

Úrsula drew on the repertoire of female sanctity to change her status from slave to mystic. She used the trope of the female mystic to generate social agency. I use the term trope in this chapter to encapsulate the diffuse and connected meanings of varied images, behaviors, and abilities associated with the female mystic within the early modern Ibero-Catholic setting. These images, behaviors and abilities associated with the figure of the female mystic were linked to religious women's "practice of everyday life", and, as Michel de Certeau classifies, should be read as tactics. Tactics are actions that seize moments of opportunity and fragmentarily insinuate themselves into the other's place without taking it over in its entirety (de Certeau xix). Tactics are actions of those who do not control a place (an institution or a territory). Over time and through a series of opportunities, individuals deploy tactics to oppose power in a specific place. Tactics are actions of those who cannot or do not access the power base. Early modern religious women's behaviors and practices should be read as tactics because they occur over time

in the space of the other -- the dominant orthodox male Catholic power base -- and, thus, they may be seen as "the art of the weak" (de Certeau 37). Early modern religious women's writing developed in response to suspicious male clergy, who needed to understand and control the spiritual experiences of women, and who wished to capitalize on those that would strengthen the image of the Church among the population.

At the beginning of her spiritual journal, Úrsula considers whether her vision is of the Devil (Úrsula 79). She draws on the women's Catholic tradition of writing and describing her encounters and conflicts with the Devil, an obstacle for mystical practice (McKnight 44). Additionally, this question illustrates how her journal incorporates one of the established conventions of women's writing, admitting not only that the subsequent vision may be of the Devil but also that she is not capable of discerning reality. This admittance of frailty reveals one challenge for women's spiritual writing. Úrsula realizes that, as an easily deceivable "daughter of Eve", to state with any authority whether this apparition is of the divine or of the diabolic would open herself up to possible error and perhaps reprisal: "Counter-Reformation ideology suggested the possibility of female error in several forms during the vida-writing process" (McKnight 38). Thus, Úrsula refuses to reveal the source of her vision so as to sidestep the possible doubt a male reader might cast on her vision.

This rhetorical tactic deployed by Úrsula was developed by Teresa of Ávila from her inculcation to the "well-established rhetorical tradition for humility topics" (Weber 50). Alison Weber outlines these topics, such as affected modesty, rhetoric of concession, alternative narratives, *captatio benevolentia*, and false humility, and suggests, "when Teresa is able to identify the despair of an overwhelming sense of worthlessness

as false humility, true humility emerges as the right to accept God's love" (Weber 75). Saint Teresa's "rhetoric of concession" belies a simultaneous guilt and innocence. The rhetoric of religious women writers may be read as ironic or multilayered because it was developed to evade reprisal while simultaneously responding to the Counter-Reformation's representations of women writers (McKnight 35). Úrsula builds on the traditions and challenges that faced early modern women writers. Úrsula's writing is replete with self-denigrating language, a traditional tactic for women writers (McKnight 33). She insists that "[she is] nothing, of no use" (van Deusen 91). She refers to herself as a "piece of trash" and "a washcloth that stays dirty" (92). She concludes that "[she] deserves to go to hell" (97). She states, "I am such a bad black woman" (104). Úrsula deploys the tactics of early modern women writers by classifying herself as weak and susceptible to diabolical diversions and thus, accesses the repertoire of female sanctity and manipulates the trope of the female visionary mystic.

Categorized as weak flesh, women religious developed a tactic -- the rhetoric of humility -- to combat the strategies deployed by the asymmetrical power relations of male ecclesial authority. Female religious invoked phrases that shrouded their assertions in doubt and superficially debased their own authority as eyewitness. They overtly placated the dominant view of the female religious as weak. For example, they may suggest they may not really know what is happening, or from whence their knowledge and insight emanates, or that it may be a trick of the Devil. Moreover, they offer this information up to be considered by the male spiritual director, requesting him to discern the meaning and authorize their experience.

However, for all its perfunctory and formulaic use of apologetics, appositives and appellations, these women's words convey the mystical experiences and scenarios in discrete terms displacing the evaluation of these mystic experiences and placing their testimonies at the feet of their confessors and their readers. Thus, by employing the rhetoric of humility (essentially the way in which female religious spun the description of the mystic scenario, introducing herself as weak, unsure, fallible and in need of guidance) permitted female religious to penetrate the space of the male religious overtime. For the female religious, the tactic is to insert her mystic experience into the formal record through oral or written performance. For the male religious, this was palatable because of the way the female religious seemingly placed emphasize on her weak constitution as an unreliable witness. However, it is a performance of misdirection: The male religious look left at the rhetorical subterfuge and the female religious look right at the divine mystic experience.

Úrsula's writings may be read as evidence of this kind of misdirection and her religious practice may be best understood as performance. I define Úrsula's performance as the ways in which she re-behaved the religious practices associated with the trope of the female mystic. Úrsula's performances indicate her active participation in her own identity construction as a mystic. My close readings focus on her re-articulation of female sanctity, which, in step with Pauline teachings, reinvents Úrsula as God's servant and slave of Christ as opposed to her social status as a slave of man. Paul employs the image of God's servant and slave of Christ to instruct believers in Christian practice (Eph. 6. 5-6). In this tradition, Catherine of Siena began almost all of her letters with the phrase, "I, Catherine, servant and slave of servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in his precious

blood” (Tylus 129). Like Catherine of Siena who invoked the bodily image of Christ’s blood to perform her role as slave of servants of Christ, Úrsula uses her body as a performance space for her own transformation from slave to mystic. Moreover, she uses this image of her laboring and suffering body to construct her cultural memory as a revered mystic. From this position, Úrsula reveals a critique of her community: her writings denounce the religious hypocrisy of the pseudo-servants of Christ and highlights the embedded racial prejudices of her early modern Ibero-American setting.

Drawing from the discipline of performance studies, this chapter applies Diana Taylor’s linked terms *repertoire* and *scenario* to explore the ways in which Úrsula’s words communicate her performance as a mystic. In her text, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), Taylor emphasizes that performance theory helps to bridge the gap between the archive -- documentary evidence and writings classified as literature -- and the repertoire -- systems of knowledge packaged and delivered via culturally specific embodiments, such as gestures and actions. I approach Úrsula’s writing from a performance perspective so as to connect her words to her lived experience as a slave and a laboring body. Taylor argues that the repertoire compiles the behaviors that diffuse cultural memory. She describes her method for examining the repertoire as “look[ing] to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors and potential outcomes” (28).

This chapter considers the “scenarios” referenced in Úrsula’s spiritual journal and interprets her words as signals of her attitudes and behaviors towards religious hypocrisy and racial prejudice. As Taylor outlines, the scenario “demands that we pay attention to milieux and corporeal behaviors” (28). Significantly, “[i]ts portable framework bears the

weight of accumulative repeats” (28). Úrsula’s performances reference this framework, the repertoire of female sanctity, which is based on the practices of religious women like Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Ávila. This repertoire is, to use Victor Turner’s phrase, “thoroughly furnished” by the following: vocal prayer, religious dress, visionary and prophetic gifts, dialogues with celestial voices, Eucharistic practice and the confessional act of writing. Úrsula’s writings do more than reference the repertoire of saintly women, they rework saintly women’s realities to create meaning for Úrsula’s own lived experiences as a slave and critique the hypocritical nature of her religious community. In this way, she uses her body as the performance space, wherein she links her suffering to the collective suffering of saintly women. In so doing, she reinvents her individual meaning of suffering as the suffering of the exploited and laboring slave body.

Performance Space: Úrsula’s Writing and Her Corporeal Identity

In the following section, I argue that Úrsula’s writings reveal her corporeal identity construction in various ways. She constructs an image of herself as a laboring and suffering servant of Christ by manipulating the trope of the female visionary mystic and accessing the repertoire of female sanctity. She uses her body as a performance space and it becomes the site in which she is remembered as a laboring servant of Christ. The way she presents her body as a physically laboring and suffering body becomes part of her *imitatio christi*. She imitates Christ by physically working and suffering like Him, as well as rearticulating His attitude about the role of work in salvation. Úrsula’s diary underscores the value of a laboring work ethic. Those who fall short of this standard are criticized and those who live up to and surpass this standard are remembered. These descriptions can be read as evidence of Úrsula’s corporeal identity

construction in that they highlight her values, attitudes and perceptions about the importance of bodily labor in worship and salvation.

Úrsula constructed a corporeal identity in various ways. Her conception of work and a good Catholic work ethic may have emerged in part through her inculcation into the baroque Catholic imaginary and its reverence for working, laboring and suffering religious icons, such as the Holy Mother, Clare of Assisi, Saint Gertrude, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa of Ávila. In his work, *How Societies Remember* (1989), Paul Connerton states that

[g]roups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised and memories are localised by a kind of mapping. We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the groups. But these mental spaces . . . refer back to material spaces that particular social groups occupy (37).

We can conceive of these famous foremothers' stories as occupying a specific mental space for Catholic religious groups during the early modern period. Better may be Jean Piaget's term schema, which describes a mental structure of preconceived ideas and framework of organizing information systems. Thus, as individuals, like Úrsula, performed the role of mystic, their performance was either placed into the schema preconceived in Catholic imaginaries or it was discarded. Religious icons *vidas*, the sermons, and songs and prayers, that reference their stories, as well as the iconography that depicts them, helps to locate these religious women within this schema, or mental space, for those groups subscribing to a baroque imaginary. Significantly, the way in which the religious woman manipulates her body or expresses her experiences through somatic descriptions is a key factor to discerning her mystic status. The saintly woman's

body becomes the site upon which her story is performed and her identity as revered mystic is predicate upon the way she presents her body.

For example, when Catherine of Siena writes her letters with her own blood and calls herself a servant and slave of servants of Christ, she generates a memory of her own embodied practice of submission and the image of her bodily fluid, her blood, as a prop. Catherine's practice is located within the framework of religious women's practice, part of the repertoire of female sanctity and the trope of the female visionary mystic. When Úrsula kisses the miraculous stretched-out, wounded hands of Christ, she too uses her body as the space upon which her personal religious experience of servitude is told. Yet, her individual story of service to Christ, encapsulated in the image of her kissing Christ's hands becomes part of the compendium of mystic women's stories in which they too used their bodies to perform their service to Christ, as in the example of Catherine of Siena.

This mapping of Úrsula's embodied practice works within the framework of the trope of the female visionary mystic. Thus, Úrsula's memory, the memory she constructs of herself for others, is localized through her appeal to the trope of the female visionary mystic and her use of her body as a performance space. Úrsula locally situates her recollection of the vision and her mystical performance of kissing Christ's hands to the performance of her religious foremothers, like signing one's name in blood, by mapping her own experiences in relation to the re-iterated, famous stories of this group of religious women and their respective manipulations of their own bodies to perform the role of the mystic. The mental spaces, the schema for mystic women in the baroque imaginary, refer back to the material spaces, the spaces of the convent and of the city. These women's bodies are located within these religious spaces and these women's mystic experiences

are located within their bodies. This use of the body to construct the mystic identity fuels the processes that create a social memory of Úrsula, the servant of God, as a religious mystic within her Limeña culture.

In her chapter, “Memory as Cultural Practice”, Taylor suggests that cultural memory is “a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection” (82). Úrsula’s mystical experiences, her visions and her conversations with Christ are her practice. Her manipulation of the trope of the female visionary mystic is an act of imagination that builds [on](#) the schema created in part by the hagiographic tradition in baroque society and [at the same time](#) a link to the images of the bodies of these revered mystic predecessors. Furthermore, Taylor suggests that the “body functions as the site of convergence binding the individual with the collective, the private with the social, the diachronic and the synchronic, memory with knowledge” (80). Religious women used their bodies as the spaces to create their social agency. I detail this manipulation of the body in Chapter Two. We may interpret these religious women’s bodies as the stage for their performance. What they do to their bodies and how they carry out those actions generate reactions from their communities and facilitate their inclusion into the schema of mystic women. Their bodies are their own but, by referencing the repertoire of female sanctity, by engaging in asceticism, by mortifying their flesh, by flagellation, and by other kinds of penance, these women engage with the schema already at work within the imaginary of their baroque Catholic society. Thus, their bodies function to create their unique memories that are simultaneously private and social, individual and collective, understood through and across time.

The consequences of this self-inflicted suffering are eerily similar to the experiences of victimized bodies and survivors of the transatlantic slave system and the Middle Passage. Úrsula's circumstances and her responses to these circumstances create a "unique racialized relationship to her physical body, the social body of the convent, and the spiritual bodies in the beyond" (van Deusen 51). Specifically, Úrsula spent years of physical suffering as a slave and servant. In addition, she self-inflicted pain as part of her religious practice of bodily mortification (van Deusen 52). It is this physical suffering that facilitated her connection to Christ's suffering and simultaneously created meaning for her own suffering. Often Úrsula describes how Christ's suffering should serve as a model not only for herself but for other religious community members.

The religious woman really only had control over her own body (van Deusen 52). Thus, the religious woman worked to use her body as the vehicle to fuse her suffering to Christ's suffering. Úrsula experienced her social position through her body (van Deusen 52). Van Deusen argues that a "corporeal 'identity'" of a strong female laborer (whose body was not her own) emerges from Úrsula's writing; this "contrasted with contemporary hagiographic 'ideals' of spiritual femininity that sought to efface the beauty and sensuality of the physical" (van Deusen 52). Kristine Ibsen comments that "a woman's corporeal pain was . . . inextricably linked to an expression of identity" (84). Úrsula's descriptions of pain both conform to and diverge from traditional mystic discourse. In the traditional sense, Úrsula expresses her identity as a physically strong laboring body and in this way she identifies with Christ's suffering and his labors. Her *imitatio christi* is performed in her labor. This performance works in multiple ways. In re-articulating and repeating the way Christ labored and suffered, and specifically, by

replicating his attitude about his labor and suffering, Úrsula underscores the beauty of his sacrifice and highlights her admiration for the physical labor requisite for her worship practice.

Úrsula's words compare her labors to Christ's labors. This fosters a reading in which Úrsula's divides worshipers into two categories: hard working laborers, such as herself and Christ and lazy, idle and hypocritical worshipers, such as the nuns of her community. In this way, her *imitatio christi* can be seen as a vehicle for her critique of her hypocritical religious community. Additionally, this categorization of worshipers as Christlike laborers or inactive bodies is connected to Úrsula's understanding of the contrast between the suffering Christ chose freely and the suffering he experienced at the hands of others. Úrsula's words also generate a reading in which she divides suffering into these two categories so as to critique the exploitative and hypocritical aspects of the transatlantic slave trade, as I have discussed in Chapter one.

Yet, there is another way in which Úrsula's *imitatio christi* functions. Yorùba religious practice does not separate work from worship. Part of the belief system is that work is outpouring and manifestation of worship. Thus, it is possible to read Úrsula's emphasis on the role of work in worship not only from a Catholic perspective but also from an Afro-religious point-of-view. Thus, her writings and the descriptions of her suffering as a physically, laboring body link her to Christ. This replicates traditional Catholic discourse and simultaneously diverges from the pattern in that she affirms rather than effaces the beauty of Christ's physical labor and suffering. In considering the Yorùba religious practice of the conflation of physical labor and worship, we may read Úrsula's *imitatio christi* as uniquely Afro-Catholic. This Afro-religious notion of work

as worship adds another dimension to the lived experiences of religious Afro-Catholic women in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic discursive space.

The tone of Úrsula's journal relates her challenge to deal with the quotidian reality of her servitude and its demand for physical labor. Úrsula copes with this challenge by comparing and contrasting her suffering to Christ, specifically, as outlined in Chapter one, the way He labored for others and His suffering at the hands of His persecutors and oppressors. Úrsula's journal describes her daily toils and her understanding of her suffering as linked to Christ's suffering. For example, upon learning that she would spend the next year working in the kitchen, she writes: "I dreaded one year of work when He had thirty-three years of infinite travail" (van Deusen 158). Úrsula often qualifies her emotions about labor by contrasting her labor to the labors of Christ. In this way she validates her own work and worship by highlighting the desire to imitate Christ's work ethic and also creates a baseline for contrast when describing the work, or rather, lackthereof of the nuns of her convent.

One of the unifying themes of Úrsula's writing is her concern for the lack of a strict work ethic and an absence of a rigorous code of religious conduct. This penchant for hard work can be read as a signal of her corporeal identity. She understands hard work and labor as the foundation and building blocks of religious life. Thus, when others [do](#) not conform to her idea of the Catholic work ethic, they become the focus of her criticism. We can read Úrsula's social criticism as supporting evidence for her construction of a corporeal identity in which hard work and labor are central to her perception of authentic religious practice. Moreover, as I discuss below, Úrsula's diary also records scenarios of her forgetting of the labor of dead slaves. These descriptions of

forgetting also underscore Úrsula's identity construction because she remembers their work and their labor comparing them to her own labor. This illustrates the need for her work to be recognized and remembered. This is an integral aspect of her *imitatio christi* and her corporeal identity construction. Úrsula's judgemental tone reveals her emphasis on work and suffering and the remembering of that work and suffering.

The tone of her diary does not approach the need to judge herself per se, yet implicit in many of her observations is a judgement of the lackadaisical religious fervor of many of her companions, alive and dead. Úrsula's interactions with the living run the gamut from brief conversations to chastisement of slaves, servants, nuns and clerics in her religious community of Santa Clara in Lima, Peru. Below, I discuss how Úrsula perceives her relationship to these individuals. While Úrsula's diary reveals her encounters with the living, its primary focus deals with encounters with the dead. Her encounters with the dead take forms of visions and voices. During her moments of "recollection", or meditation, she witnesses various scenarios in which the dead, or at times the almost dead, are suffering in the flames of purgatory. Many of these visions follow the ritual of communion. Women of the early modern period felt that visions and intercession on behalf of souls in purgatory was acceptable as long as it followed communion (van Deusen 42). These scenarios in which Úrsula critiques the work ethic of her community members support a reading of her corporeal identity because they contrast the ideal work ethic, a physical laboring and suffering workload versus an inactive, idle and hypocritical work ethic. Úrsula uses the vision space to rearticulate her perception of her lazy and hypocritical society.

Úrsula's retelling of her encounters with departed lazy souls signals her value of physical bodily labor. In many scenarios, she critiques the social and racial stratification of her society by implying that those on top end up at the bottom, usually in a fiery pit. She relates many visions of departed clergy members, whose spirits she is obliged to commend to God. These clergy committed a variety of sins such as frivolousness (van Deusen 98), spending too much time in "useless diversions" (95), hypocrisy (87), and acting as a married man (107). In many of the instances she describes the sins of the clergy and the nuns. She deploys the convention of celestial voices to discount the actions of kings (101), queens (126) and viceroys (123) in comparison to divine power. She comments about the orderliness of the hereafter (85) and its state of organization (96, 108, 116). She describes the passing of a black woman without confession from being overworked in the kitchen and notes that the abbess could have corrected the problem (90). She juxtaposes the passing of a black woman whose performance of contrition was so earnest that she appeared in a shroud at Christ's feet with another contrite nun who appeared as a newborn girl representing her saved soul (100). Úrsula's visions function as a critique of religious hypocrisy and racial stratification, and as a site of creating social memory. In describing her visions, she creates a space to remember and re-articulate slaves' embodied suffering. Úrsula's emphasis on not forgetting the role of Christ-like labor for salvation may be read as part of her construction of a corporeal identity in that Úrsula's writings relate how she values physical labor and suffering, and, as I point out below, how she may consider it as integral to religious worship.

Úrsula remembers the various souls of many black women who had labored and worked in the convent. Joseph Roach, in his discussion of the Circum-Atlantic

interculture, explains forgetting as the displacement, or deferment of remembering violence:

[w]hile a great deal of the the unspeakable violence instrumental to [the] creation [of the New World] may have been officially forgotten, Circum-Atlantic Memory retains its consequences, one of which is that the unspeakable cannot be rendered forever inexpressible: the most persistent mode of forgetting is memory imperfectly deferred (4).

It is the memory of the exploited slave that Úrsula recovers in her journal. In her journal, she highlights how she had forgotten so many slaves and their experiences. However, the fact that she writes about the process of forgetting signifies the process of remembering as well. Her memory of these other women's experiences was deferred. Úrsula rescues these forgotten women's voices in rendering their stories and expressing their realities of pain and suffering.

Úrsula's visions, the scenarios she remembers, underscore the power and consequence of the process of forgetting. She writes that the slave Maria Bran had died fourteen years ago, adding that Maria Bran was "one of the things most forgotten for me in this world" (van Deusen 80). The emphasis is upon the forgetting of the slave experience, either Maria Bran's or her own. Much of the journal reveals a need to rescue the memory of the suffering slave. In various instances, Úrsula recalls an encounter with a dead slave soul and writes explicitly addressing the problem of forgetting. When she encounters the soul of the black slave woman Luisa, Úrsula records Luisa's voice: "No one remembers me" (82). Another time, Úrsula writes that the voices told her to commend the spirit of a black woman to God. Úrsula recalls that she had died over thirty

years before and she “had forgotten about her as if she had never existed” (88). This emphasis upon the fact that she had forgotten these black women would not be of much importance if it were not for the fact that she does not write about forgetting any of the other types of dead people she encounters. It is only when she describes the encounters with the souls of the dead female slaves does she remark about the fact that they are forgotten. In manipulating the trope of the female visionary mystic, Úrsula includes the memories of those exploited by the slave system and their specific embodied suffering in the convent. These memories highlight the unique suffering of slaves in the religious space in early modern Lima. Úrsula’s emphasis on remembering slave work and highlighting the hypocritical religious practice of her social superiors, such as clergy and royalty, can be read as an indication of her corporeal identity construction because these descriptions reveal the meaning physical labor and suffering have for Úrsula.

In the following analysis, I highlight Úrsula’s writings that use visions of purgatory as a vehicle to creatively subvert and critique the social stratification in the Convent of Santa Clara in Lima, Peru. Úrsula remembers the slave experience of pain and suffering. Úrsula constructs an image of her laboring and exploited body and uses her body as the performance space for her *imitatio christi* -- her unique method of fusing herself and her suffering to Christ. Importantly, my analysis examines these scenarios to underscore Úrsula’s attitudes about racial prejudice and religious hypocrisy in her early modern slave society. She perceives lazy, inactive individuals as hypocrites because they exploit the labor of others instead of working for themselves. Úrsula work ethic is intimately linked to her understanding of salvation. Yorùba religious practice conflates work and worship. Thus, I suggest that Úrsula’s emphasis on the value of physical labor

may be attributable to an Afro-religious influence. Additionally, I highlight Úrsula's visions that may be read as Afro-Catholic. Úrsula manipulates Catholic typologies that foster an intertextual reading with Biblical images that may be interpreted as linked to Yorùbá religious practice.

A Close Reading of Úrsula's Visions

One day in 1650, in the Convent of Santa Clara, Úrsula de Jesús wrote the following words in her spiritual diary, “[t]hey tell me to suffer all without complaint or criticism, not letting anyone know how I really feel, as though I were a stone. Do I not see it? What happens when they step on the side of a brick that does not move and then on those bricks that are loosely placed?” (104). As previously outlined in chapter two, this passage from Úrsula's spiritual diary illustrates her awareness of her active role in her mystic identity construction. She knows that to perform the role of the dutiful and submissive female Catholic religious, she must suffer quietly as others walk all over her. This phase reveals her self-consciousness of her submissive role. When she asks, “Do I not see it?”, she effectively states, “I see it”. This rhetorical question signals Úrsula's awareness of the repertoire of female sanctity and her role in it: she chooses to equate herself with a well-placed brick. She knows that well-placed bricks construct solid foundations. By equating herself with the well-placed brick, Úrsula links herself to her religious predecessors, such as Clare of Assisi, Saint Gertrude, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Ávila, whose saintly lives form the foundation of female sanctity in hagiographic discourse. Úrsula resolutely commits to build upon this foundation. In so doing, she ranks herself above the inferior, loosely placed bricks, which can be interpreted as the white, unruly and lazy members of her religious community.

Úrsula's diary records manifold scenarios of disobedience, unruliness and gossip performed by the nuns of her convent. Using the convention of a dialogue with a celestial voice, "[Úrsula] asked St. Francis: 'What is this that they say the profession of donadas has no value?' The saint replied, *There is a difference because the nuns are white and of the Spanish nation, but with respect to the soul: All is one. Whoever does more is worth more*" (121). Úrsula's internal dialogue with St. Francis critically reframes religious practice, underscoring the differentiated social ordering of her community. Her words expose the inherent hypocrisy, or double standard, that permeates her community: doctrinally, all are one in Christ and yet socially, all are separate, not equal. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3.28). Úrsula critiques her religious community members because she implicitly contrasts the gossipy nuns' behavior with the behaviors linked to the repertoire of female sanctity. She inserts her own laboring body within this repertoire. Úrsula's use of the repertoire of female sanctity allows her to highlight her submissive and suffering slave body, the body that must be walked over and that, nonetheless, is superior to the idle bodies of her fellow (white) nuns. As she sees it, it is the laboring body that provides the foundation of female sanctity.

Úrsula's spiritual journal is replete with scenarios that critique religious hypocrisy. Her words disclose an inversion of the social, and ingrained racial, stratification. Specifically, she uses the image of purgatory as the vehicle for her condemnation of hypocrisy. As part of her mystic identity construction, Úrsula envisions and communicates with various souls in purgatory. Úrsula's supernatural encounters can be read separately as commentaries and connectedly as deliberate juxtapositions. Úrsula

contrasts the vision of Maria Bran, a mildly chastened soul who had suffered in life as a black slave, with the vision of an agonizing, flaming and suffering soul: that of a lax, white priest. Úrsula comments on the lackadaisical and disobedient behavior of white religious members of her community by describing the apparition of a friar who was believed to have committed suicide:

[The friar] suffered the very same torment that exists in hell. . . . [T]he flames there tormented him . . . he still suffered from head to toe: especially around the crown of his head, where he experienced particular torment because he did not wear the tonsure ordered by our father, Saint Francis [. . .] (van Deusen 79).

This quote is part of a larger selection of Úrsula's spiritual diary that fosters a reading in which Úrsula contrasts her superior spiritual work with the inferior work of the friar. She describes how the vision of this lax friar persisted each time she entered a state of recollection, and how he pleaded for her to commend his spirit. Úrsula contests, "Who am I, what worth do I have to do such a thing?" (80). Úrsula authorizes her response by using the friar as a mouthpiece: "God can place His special gifts in anyone" (80). Úrsula's writing communicates that blacks can be God's servants and whites can be punished, regardless of social status. As Úrsula notes, "Many kings and monarchs, emperors and powerful leaders were in hell: priests and nuns as well" (80).

The early modern milieu assumes that a black slave woman cannot intercede on behalf of a white friar's soul. Úrsula subverts this norm through her manipulation of the trope of the female mystic. First, she pulls from the repertoire of female sanctity and underscores her humble, submissive status by questioning her ability to intercede for the friar. Then, she reinvents this aspect of the trope through the friar's answer: she deploys

the voice of the friar (male authority) to emphasize God's gift for her as a visionary mystic, and His servant. Úrsula's rhetoric of concession underscores her subservient position: she concedes that she is unworthy by questioning her own ability but affirms that she is worthy by answering that she has the right to accept God's gift. Yet, this rhetoric defends her position by elevating her – due to God's grace – to a status superior to priests, nuns, and monarchs.

Úrsula juxtaposes her encounters with the dead to reveal a remedy of inversion where an individual gets his or her due not based on social status but based on works, often times, slave work, the work of being walked all over. Úrsula critiques the evolving racial prejudice in her community with the juxtaposition of Maria Bran's sojourn in purgatory to that of the suicidal friar. The friar suffers for disobedience because he did not display the tonsure, he did not shave his head to signal his renunciation of worldly passion (79). In contrast, the apparition of the soul of Maria Bran wears a priest's vestment of the whitest whites: her garb is embellished and adorned, her head is crowned with flowers and her face is "quite lovely, . . . a resplendent black" (80). By illustrating the contrasts in rewards and punishments received by Maria Bran and the flaming friar, Úrsula critiques the social ordering in her religious community where the dutiful, hard working black slave is ranked below the disobedient, lazy friar. Úrsula uses the repertoire of female sanctity and the trope of the female visionary mystic to critique and subvert the religious contradictions of her time. She reframes her own slave experiences by linking her work to the work of saintly foremothers.

As stated above, Úrsula describes her own suffering and also remembers the suffering of other exploited slave women thus highlighting the role in forgetting as part of

the violence of the slave experience. Úrsula singles out the problem of forgetting. She describes some instances of forgetting that revolve around members of the religious community forgetting the ways in which Christ suffered for them, and subsequently, the way they should behave. For example, Úrsula writes how the nuns continually forget to focus on Christ and his sacrifice during communion and relates how this bothers Christ. In the end of the scenario, she depicts Christ with the imagery of a slave master carrying a whip.

[o]n the following days [Christ] returned to complain about the same matters: the little attention [the nuns] paid to His Divine Majesty; forgetting His gifts; and sinning without any remorse or restraint, as though no other life existed or without realizing what they are doing in this one . . . [Christ] led [Úrsula] to understand that only a few had been saved. In His hands He held a whip made of two leather straps as thick as two slim fingers. It hung down by His side (124).

Enmeshed between these two descriptions is the imperative not only to remember Christ's suffering but to remember the slave experience typified by suffering and violent exploitation. Moreover, Úrsula illustrates that the punishment for the nuns' earthly sins is the retribution of suffering at the hands of an angry Christ, a Christ described similarly to the slave master, whip in hand (although not raised but at his side), ready to inflict suffering and pain upon those that she deems deserve it. In this inversion of the violent role of master and slave, Úrsula's writing emphasizes the need for the terrestrial wrong of human laziness to be righted by God. Overtly, this image may appear paradoxical. Úrsula's image of Christ as slavemaster meting out justice by replicating the kinds of violence similarly used during the transatlantic slave trade may be view as

contradictory to Christ's image as the suffering servant. However, Úrsula's image as Christ the Slavemaster, or Christ the Punisher, appeals to and replicates Old Testament discourse of the vengeful and angry character of the Godhead that smites the unfaithful and the inconstant and it simultaneously questions the inherent validity of this characterization of the Christian Godhead. Would Christ perform the role of the Slavemaster? Would he act violently to recompense laziness, forgetfulness and hypocrisy? Thus, at its core, this image may be the most telling the conflictual subject position of an Afro-Catholic in the early modern Ibero-Atlantic world. In the same breath, Úrsula may desire for her exploiters to receive divine Old Testament justice for their actions of violence but this feeling may be tempered by her compassion for others who suffer based on her own experience of suffering and on her understanding of Christ's freely chosen Passion and his compassion as exemplified in his attitude as the suffering servant.

Imitatio Christi and Úrsula's Criticism of Religious Hypocrisy

In the following passage, Úrsula manipulates Catholic discourse to critique the unjust and abusive treatment by slave owners. In retelling Christ's story of the Last Supper, her comments about how Christ was treated can be read as her attitudes about how she as a slave is treated. Because Úrsula links her suffering to Christ's suffering as part of her *imitatio christi*, we can read her descriptions of His suffering as a covert critique of her slave suffering:

The voices tell me that my Lord Jesus brought His apostles to the Last Supper, washed their feet with such loving compassion, and did not refuse to do the same with Judas, though He knew what he had plotted. Washing their feet and drying

them with that towel symbolized confession, and that when He gave them communion, he did the same with Judas in order not to scandalize the others. If we found out we were being betrayed we would say, “I am enraged, I cannot stand the sight of him.” When they apprehended him and Judas arrived to give Him a kiss of peace, He could have killed him then and there, but He pretended not to know, just as He does now with us. He always waits for us, and here we always offend Him. I am in such a quandary with so many things coming all at once. I have no head or memory for such things. One other thing: we [owe](#) the Lord so much. He did so much for us, and still we turn our backs on Him. Instead, we serve the one who beats us with an iron rod (van Deusen 86).

This passage reveals Úrsula’s internal conflict about her conflicting subject positions as a devout Catholic, a servant or slave, and an individual acutely aware and frustrated, perhaps enraged by the hypocrites of her religious community. To begin to uncover Úrsula’s critique, we should read Christ as a stand-in, or surrogate, for Úrsula in this vision. The vision offers the image of Christ as suffering servant at mealtime. This is an image perhaps all too familiar for Úrsula. Because this vision focuses on Christ’s duties with regards to meal preparation, it is not implausible to see how Úrsula would use this image to relate her attitude about her own role as servant during meal times. During the Last Supper, He prepared the Eucharist, He washed the disciples’ feet and He dried them as well, including those of Judas. Judas represents an individual in the employ of the Devil, or the Devil himself in the tradition of Catholic discourse, and his image is synonymous with the evils of economic gain and usury (Vitulo 34). If we read Úrsula as a stand in for Christ, then we can read the one He serves in this vision, Judas, as a stand-

in for those who Úrsula serves, the white slave owning deceitful nuns of her convent. When Úrsula writes about Judas' plotting and Christ's desire to avoid scandal by treating him the same so as to protect the other disciples, Úrsula is localizing the memory of exploitive service in her own convent. In the line, "If we found out we were being betrayed we would say, 'I am enraged, I cannot stand the sight of him'", Úrsula reveals the rage that she and other nuns would experience if the hypocritical nature of the deceitful nuns were publicized. Assuredly, Úrsula was clearly aware of how many of the nuns were duplicitous and deceitful, but to protect the entire community, Úrsula, like Christ, must treat all the nuns equally and not incite scandal.

The image of plotting and scandal has a unique meaning within the conventual space of early modern societies. As van Deusen discusses in her book and her article, much of the daily routines of the women from various ethnic and social classes in the religious space were plagued by these kinds of instances of bickering and backbiting. Gossip and scandal can be read as the quintessential problems that frustrated religious communal living. Additionally, Donald Ramos has highlighted the powerful force of the *voz popular*, or murmurations and gossip in bringing people under the gaze of the Inquisition (889). Gossip and scandal are two of the most powerful weapons in the early modern arsenal of tactics where orthodox appearances are more important than heterodox realities (Johnson 59). Furthermore, Úrsula covertly conceals her thoughts of resistance and violent responses to this kind of betrayal and deceit. She remarks that Jesus could have killed his betrayers: "He could have killed him then and there," (86). This phrase may represent Úrsula's transference of her urges to kill her oppressors to Christ's ability to kill Judas in this scenario. When Úrsula writes, "He pretended not to

know, just as He does now with us”, she references Christ’s deferred judgement and because we read Úrsula as a stand-in for Christ in this scenario, this phrase reveals Úrsula’s attitude. The tone Úrsula uses in this passage reveals her awareness and frustration with her oppression and exploitation; and it underscores the inherent hypocrisy of those religious individuals who participate within the slave trade by owning slaves within her community.

In the final part of this entry, Úrsula sets up her direct denunciation of the physical abuse. Deploying the rhetoric of humility, she prefaces her attack by relating how confused she is and her incapacity to think straight and really remember what the voices told her: “I am in such a quandary . . . I have no head or memory” (86). By shrouding the accusation in doubt, it deflects the assertiveness of the critique, weakening its sting, and shielding her from reprisal: “We serve the one who beats us with an iron rod” (86). Overtly, Úrsula uses Catholic discourse -- it is the Devil that beats the sinners with the iron rod -- but by placing this statement in juxtaposition to the previous phrase, “[Christ] did so much for us, and still we turn our backs on Him” (86), where we read Úrsula as Christ, we read Úrsula’s mediated opinion: She does so much for the nuns and still they turn their backs on her. Taken as a whole, the passage describes the role of the suffering servant, Úrsula, so when she employs the image of serving in the final sentence we can assume that Úrsula is continuing in the submissive position of the servant of man. Thus, the one who is beating and abusing the servant with the iron rod, is not necessarily the devil, but the white, gossipy, lazy, unappreciative nuns whom Úrsula serves in the convent.

In this previous passage, Úrsula uses her body, the suffering body of a slave of Man and a servant of Christ, to perform the role of the devout female religious. Úrsula constructs a discourse in which she denounces sinners. The sinners she most fervently and covertly attacks are the white hypocritical slave owners in her religious community. Úrsula's reproach of these religious hypocrites and her abhorrence for their avoidance of labor and her, and their subsequent, exploitation of Úrsula's work may stem from Úrsula's belief in work as worship. While labor and work are central to Catholic ideology, and many orders placed labor and work at the center of their religious practice and devotion, in Catholic convents and monasteries throughout the Ibero-Atlantic world where the ratio between slaves and clergy was practically two to one, we can imagine how this practice of religious devotion through work and labor appeared practically non-existent to the slaves and black servants that lived with and worked for these Catholic religious devotees.

For Úrsula, her perception about the role of work and labor as worship may encompass more than the ideal notion of the Catholic work ethic. Her view of worship as ritual work may be traced to aspects of Afro-religious ideology, thus, testifying to her unique Afro-Catholic practice in the transculturated space of colonial Lima. As previously outlined, Lima was a multiethnic space where various knowledges and peoples circulated and commingled. This urban setting was composed of various African peoples who practiced variants of their respective Afro-religious belief systems. Some of the organizing tenants of the Afro-religion of the Yorùbá are "built upon themes of ancestral continuity and connection to nature's forces, spiritual empowerment, agency, transformation through initiation and priesthood, respect and mutual aid through

membership in a ‘house’, [and] healing and self-defense through ritual work” (Brown 276). It is the relationship between these Yorùbá religious precepts of ritual work and membership in a “house” that is important to consider alongside Úrsula’s descriptions of her work and physical labor.

One central organizing space for the practice of the Yorùbá faith was the *ilé*, or the “house” (Abimbólá 26). This space may be understood as a compound or sacred shrine (Henry 36). Often, the domestic space of the house also functioned as the worship space. The *ilé* is sometimes known as the place of residence of the priestess (Murphy 84). The relationship between ritual work and worship is best documented in the ethnographic and anthropological work on the Brazilian *terreiros*, a permutation of the Yorùbá *ilé* in diaspora. In the space of these *terreiros* there is not a clear distinction between “work” and “worship” (Harding 14). These religious spaces require time and commitment to maintenance and for the preparation for feasts, ritual sacrifices and cultural ceremonies. Additionally, time spent constructing and caring for altars requires work and dedication. “Candomblé is an extremely labor-intensive religion” (Harding 14). While some scholars suggest that this kind of work ethic is part of a modern embodied practice of the memory of the slave experience, other scholars suggest that this kind of intensive work, understood as part of the New World Orisha worship practice in the sacred space of the *ilé*, is not part of colonial oppression and has African antecedents (Clark 379).

In this religious space, one focus of work/worship is on the preparation for sacrifices and feasts to the house’s Orisha. These sacrifices are known as *ebo* (Love 30). There is an elaborate practice constructed around these sacrifices. Priestesses play

an important role in understanding what kinds of sacrifices correspond to specific deities, or Orishás. The goal of the sacrifice and its preparation is to maintain balance within the devotee's life. The preparation for these sacrifices is carried out in the domestic space and revolves around the tasks of food preparation (Love 30). The Yorùbá *ilé* became the center of domestic and religious life. The role of the priestess to understand the ways in which work was to be done so as to correctly enact the specific *ebo* was central to Yorùbá religious practice.

This concept of work as worship is one way in which a Yorùbá religious lens provides new insight into Úrsula's emphasis on the physical labor and work within her Santa Clara convent in colonial Lima. In the following section, I offer a close reading of Úrsula's Palm Sunday vision, which may also be read from a Yorùbá religious perspective. I argue that Úrsula develops an Afro-Catholic discourse using the mental space, or schema, of the baroque Catholic mystical vision to highlight Yorùbá worship imagery.

Úrsula's Afro-Catholic Visions

Úrsula sets the scene, writing that the vision began on Palm Sunday while she prepared for communion. She highlights her humility and service saying to God, in her mystical conversation, "[. . .] yo quisiera/ser el poyto en que subia su majestad para subir en el pollino en que entro en jerusa-/len -" (Úrsula 8). I cite Úrsula's spiritual journal in Spanish to highlight my Afro-Catholic interpretation of the term "poyto" in its context. I translate Úrsula's phrase, as "I would like to be the Poitou mule His majesty mounted in order to mount the little donkey that carried Him into Jerusalem." Van Deusen translates this phrase, as "I would like to be the stool His Majesty stood upon in

order to mount the mule that carried Him into Jerusalem” (Úrsula 89). In the following close reading, I offer an interpretation in which I read the word “poyto” to represent a strong and highly valuable kind of Poitou mule. These kinds of mules were bred specifically for clergy in France and transported to Spain and South America (Dohner 389). Thus, living in colonial Lima, it is possible that Úrsula’s register incorporated various terms to reference various breeds of animals that were used for specific tasks. In reading “poyto” as a specific kind of mule used in a specific way, it fosters a reading in which Úrsula’s words reveal a specific meaning that goes beyond images of Catholic submission.

Additionally, I have found the same spelling of “poyto” referenced in legal codes pertaining to the rules about the traffic, sale and use of different kinds of mules, donkeys, and horses in Iberia cited in Alfonso XI’s Provision of 1346. The following example contextualizes my interpretation of “poyto” as a mule rather than a “stool” and is lifted from a footnote, which is transcribed but not modernized.

Et si alguno destes oviere de ya en nuestra corte o a otra parte que sea lexo, que el día quisiere pasar de la villa o del lugar de morare que muestre el cavallo o rrocino poyto vommo fivho rd z los alcalldes e le den alvaba ffirmado de sus nombres e sellado con sus sellos commo dicho es, e que vaya de mula aunque non tiene cavallo nin rrocicante si [. . .] (Documentos del Archivo de Madrid, Tomo 1, p. 282-283 cited in Martínez 142).

This citation illustrates that my interpretation of “poyto” as a specific kind of mule has precedence. However, in changing the translation in this way, the phrase overtly is nonsensical. Thus, this image needs to be unpacked.

At first glance, it seems like an innocuous image of Catholic submission. However, this overt Catholic submission conceals a covert Afro-religious image. Yorùbá religious practice understands its pantheon of Orishás as the access points to the mystical realm and divine knowledge. To commune with the Godhead the practitioner must humble herself to receive the spirit of the Orishá, the conflated ancestor/nature spirit, permitting the Orishá to mount the submissive practitioner:

Ritual enactments of mounting . . . highlight those dimensions of Oyo-Yorùbá kinship ideology most consonant with spirit possession and the alienation of personal will -- that is, the notion of the physical head's occupation by the ancestral of heavenly 'inner head' (Matory 223).

This image of mounting is part of Yorùbá spirit possession and mystical trance. It comes from the image of the Yorùbá-Oyo ancestors who were great horsemen that mounted and controlled their subjects (Matory 74). In Úrsula's image, she wishes to become the mule, specifically, a Poitou, "His Majesty" mounted so as to mount the "pollino", or little donkey, on which he entered Jerusalem. Before addressing this repetition of the image of mounting, let us consider the two different images of the beasts of burden: a "poyto" and a "pollino". The "poyto", or rather the Poitou mule, in a sense, is a kind of horse, and was initially bred as a saddle animal (Dohner 389). Tracing back to the Middle Ages, the Poitou was a reputable breed of mule. Senior clergy and noble government officials sought out these "magnificent mules" (Dohner 389). Poitou, France became the commercial center for the breeding and sale of these kinds of elegant mules and, thus, their namesake. Moreover, Poitou mules were "improved in the sixteenth century" when they were bred with Friesian and Brabant type mares and by the eighteenth century the

Poitou was regarded as the finest and strongest mule (Dohner 390). Additionally, "the Poitou's most striking feature was his long, thick, wavy coat, which was never trimmed and fell in long mats or cords called *cadettes*" (Dohner 390). Importantly, the Poitou was the size of a horse with the "substance of a drafter", it was larger than a donkey. Significantly, "Poitou breeders were a closed, almost secretive society that also held to some highly unusual and misguided husbandry practices. The Poitou . . . was kept year-round in a dark, closed stall with little attention to his grooming" (Dohner 390). This image of a stronger, more elegant, long-haired mule, bred exclusively under clandestine practice works to uncover an Yorùbá-African worship practice within Úrsula's vision, as I will in short explain.

The term "pollino" is metaphorically a horse of a different color. "Pollino" denotes an image of a very different kind of pack animal. In the 1611 Covarrubias dictionary, the entry for pollino reads "el borrico nuevo, . . . Pollina, la burra" (NTLLE). In the same dictionary, the term borrico reads "porque tiene este pelo que no es corto como el del cavallo, ni es largo como el del camello, o el del carnero: y porque cada año le atufan por el mes de Março, y le quitan el pelo, o borra" (NTLLE). Thus, the word "pollino" connotes an image of a young donkey, or ass, whose hair, irritatingly, grows long enough that around Easter it needs to be shorn. I read the contrast between these two disparate images of equine as intentional. Úrsula writes that she wants to be the Poitou. She links herself to the strong, longhaired, elegant and reputable mule. She refers to the ass that Christ mounts, as young, frustrated and shaved. Moreover, the Poitou was renowned for his "chain-like" locks. In this same vision, Úrsula sees a visage of a red and white Nazarene with "hair falling to his shoulders" (van Deusen 89). This

mention of long hair acquires a unique and syncretic meaning when juxtaposed to the image of the Poitou with its long “chain-like” flowing coat. What is clear is that Úrsula chooses to use two distinct words that overtly reference a Catholic typology of peace and docility: Christ’s prophetic entrance into Jerusalem mounted on a donkey. However, covertly this image juxtaposes two kinds of mounting on two distinct kinds of steeds. Initially, this phrase reads unintelligible: Úrsula wishes to be the strong, elegant, reputable, Poitou mule with chain-like, flowing, locks of hair that Christ used to mount the young, Easter-shorn, donkey. However, seen from the vantage point of a Yorùbá devotee, it fits within the Afro-religious cosmological practice of mounting and spirit possession. In the following section, I outline the Yorùbá ritual of mounting so as to then analyze and interpret Úrsula’s vision for Afro-syncretic symbology.

Yorùbá Spirit Possession and Mounting

Usually women play the role of the priestesses in Yorùbá religious practice. The main role of the Yorùbá priest is that of medium between this world and the next. In the body, or literally, the head of the medium, the priest transforms as her Orishá spiritually mounts -- takes possession of -- the devotee. Becoming a Yorùbá priest is a long and elaborate process. As part of this process, devotees undertake initiations to prepare themselves to install the Orishá on their heads -- to be able to house the ancestor spirit and interpret his or her messages. As part of this preparation, "their heads are shaved, and they are secluded in a dark shrine" (Drewal 182). Note how this practice is similar to the clandestine husbandry practices of the secret society of poitou mule breeders.

After the initiate has been prepared and vested with the power to care for her Orishá -- her indoctrination and training as a Yorùbá priestess -- she may wear a special

hairdo to signify her Orishá and "show that this is a head endowed with power" (Drewal 182). This image of the special preparation of the hair to signify power and status is similar to the image of the Poitou mule, with its long-chain like locks and grand, draft-horse-like power. The priests are referred to as "wives" of their Orishá and while they are mounted by their Orishá in possession trance, "they at the same time master that spirit through training and turn its power to their own advantage" (Drewal 182). During the possession trance, which often is accompanied by dance and song, the Orishá is "said to mount the devotee and, for a time, that devotee becomes the [Orishá]" (Drewal 183). The animating spirit of the Orishá temporarily displaces the "spirit" of the medium being mounted. This union or, spirit mediumship, is one of the central and foundational roles of the priest in conjunction with divination of the proper *ebo*, sacrifice, as previously stated above.

Also important to the ritual of mounting, is the image of the head. Yorùbá practice posits that the physical head of a devotee may be thought of as the "outer head". This concept is then conceived of in opposition to the "inner head". The "inner head" may be understood as the "content of reincarnation" (Bascom cited in Matory 145) or it may be conceived as the "symbol of free choice"; "[s]pirit possession, as the displacement or invasion of the head, is proof of what is implicit in this image of the 'inner head': the junior, subordinated, and wifely self is hollow. Such wifely hollowness is both the premise and the product of Oyo-Yorùbá politico-religious hierarchy" (Matory 145). Thus, the role of the priest in Yorùbá practice of spirit possession, known as mounting, is to train herself to be the perfect vessel for the head of the Orishá, the ancestor-spirit. By becoming filled with this spirit, the priest obtains authority to

interpret divine messages to instruct her devotees as to how to maintain balance within their lives. Thus, the goal of the Yorùbá priest is to be mounted by her Orishá.

Yorùbá religious ritual should be thought of as a palimpsest of metaphoric meanings. Yorùbá ritual is traced to ancestor history. These ancestor kings, termed *Alafin*, were descendants of Odúdúwá. As I outlined in chapter one, these stories are traced to the origins of Yorùbáland and the Oyo Empire. In these stories, the kings became supernatural manifestations. Yorùbá practitioners can become priests and mediums for the various Orishás, the conflated image of the ancestor/nature deity. These Orishás are considered emissaries of the one creator God, Olorún, also known as Olodumare. The image of the head, the image of mounting and the image of various Orishás are used to construct meaning and attest to Yorùbá cosmology. While Úrsula's visions are overtly read as Catholic that reference biblical typologies, they also can be read to convey Yorùbá religious imagery.

Moreover, "[t]he uniting of devotee and deity into one image often cause some confusion for researchers who try to establish the identity of figures represented in Yorùbá sculpture. Sculpture represents the union of the priest and deity by depicting the former with accoutrements associated with the latter" (Drewal 183). While this quote explains Yorùbá religious sculpture, I suggest we should read Úrsula's vision in a similar fashion. Thus, the biblical image of Christ, or perhaps Oxalá -- "the orixá associated with the sky, initiation, the creation of human beings, patient wisdom, purity and Jesus Christ" (Johnson 117) -- mounted on a young donkey, perhaps a relatively novice Yorùbá medium symbolized by the image of the "pollino" -- the young, shaved donkey -- may be read as one single unified image of Úrsula's Orishá who, over the course of centuries

mounted numerous and varied religious faithful. If we read the image of Christ mounted on the donkey as one unified image, the image of spirit possession, of the mounting of the submissive “inner head”, or free will, we at once see the biblical typology of the power of choice in Christ’s submission and the powerful image of the Yorùbá ancestor nature deity, Oxalá.

When Úrsula writes that she desires to be the “poyto” that facilitates “His Majesty’s” mounting of the “pollino”, we may infer that “His Majesty” overtly refers to Christ but covertly invokes the image of Oxalá. When we overtly read the image of Christ mounting the donkey, we may covertly read the unified image of the Orishá Oxalá, who has possessed the shaved head of the initiate, transforming her outer head into the inner head of the Yorùbá deity. Thus, when Úrsula states she wants to be the “poyto” she at once manipulates the Catholic discourse and articulates Yorùbá religious discourse requesting that she as medium become available to be mounted by her Orishá Jesus Christ.

Thus, this phrase, “quisiera ser el poyto en que subia su majestad . . .” reveals Úrsula’s Afro-Catholic practice. The Catholic image of Christ, the Godhead, mounting the donkey on Palm Sunday takes on a new and conflated African image when considering the Yorùbá worship practice of mounting and the concept of the “inner head”. The image of Úrsula desiring to be the mule that facilitates Christ’s mounting of the young donkey as He enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is intelligible as a Yorùbá religious image of a strong, elegant, and renowned priestess medium, with her hairdo of long, chain-like locks who desires to facilitate the unification with her Orishá Oxalá in the spirit possession ritual of mounting.

The Afro-Catholic Significance of Úrsula's Vision

The phrase, “yo quisiera ser el poyto en que subia su majestad . . .” compacts the images of Yorùbá spirit possession known as mounting into the Catholic image of submission, mounting a donkey like Christ. This compacted image takes on a larger Afro-Catholic meaning when read in concert with Úrsula's entire Palm Sunday vision. In the following close reading, I deconstruct Úrsula's vision into segments so as then to reconstruct them and reveal the overall syncretic message conveyed.

In the first portion of this entry, Úrsula describes what occurs later that same day, Palm Sunday (van Deusen 89). She describes that she was in the choir room and in a state of recollection. She asks God to give her the grace to receive Him, when she sees in the ciborium -- the canopy in the church that covers the Eucharistic space --

a large, crystalline window beyond compare. Behind it, I saw a spectacular, very white Nazarene dressed in a deep-red tunic with his hair falling to his shoulders and his arms open like the Savior. I began to call out to God that I could only believe in Him, and only for Him did I come to worship (89).

At first glance, it would appear that the Nazarene figure is Christ, however, Úrsula calls out to God exclaiming that she can only worship him. Thus, we may suspect that this figure is not Christ, as part of Tridentine dogma: Úrsula highlights throughout her journal her worship of the Holy Trinity and her understanding of this Christian discourse. If the figure is not Christ, then who is he? The fact that his arms are open like the Savior also intimates that he is not overtly the Savior and his red tunic contrasts against his whiteness. These colors may reference the Yorùbá Orishá Shango (Karade

100). Most likely, this image is a conflation of imagery, perhaps some Yorùbá but mostly Catholic.

In the next part of the vision, Úrsula deploys the tactic of the rhetoric of concession, admitting that she does not want these visions:

I do not want to have visions or have the voices speak to me. After this happened I said to the Lord, "What do I need these visions for? What use are the visions to me?" The voices said that for those who love one another, the more they communicate, the more their love grows. By seeing what He did and how He suffered for us, we can be grateful and thankful and understand that sins are punished (89).

In her admittance of not wanting to hear these voices, Úrsula covers the former syncretic image of the not-overtly-Christ image who presents as a red and white savior visage by alluding to its potential diabolical influence -- her uncertainty of the identity of the red and white visage -- because doubt is openly equated with the Devil in Counter-Reformation Catholic discourse (Schreiner 74, 75). Úrsula, as susceptible to the tricks of the Devil, underscores this uncertainty as to the origin of the voices and the visions. Yet, by the end of this entry Úrsula manipulates the trope of the female visionary mystic. In the fashion of religious women's discursive tactics, Úrsula raises doubt as to the veracity of her vision. Then she reconstructs her mystic vision to include her unique Afro-Catholic image. She answers the doubt highlighting that the image is not of the Devil but one who comes out of love, to express love, and importantly, to express judgement: "to understand that sins are punished." This phrase highlights the Catholic perception of the Christian God as the one who metes out justice. However, it is also significant that in the

Oyo-Yorùbá tradition, Shango plays a similar role. In the oral tradition of the Oyo-Yorùbá, Shango came to rule during a time of political and moral decay (Warburton 10). It was his challenge to restore moral order. Shango was sent to rebuke the crime of theft, amongst other crimes and “[t]he frequency of drastic punishments earned Shango the name ‘The Lord of Thunder’” (Warburton 10). Thus, what prevails in Úrsula’s vision is a divine image of a not-quite-Christ savior, with a white and red display, who comes to love and to judge, to restore order.

To add another dimension to the possible syncretic nature of this vision, we need to explore the setting of this vision and the intertextuality of the Biblical typology of the fig tree. While overtly Úrsula’s vision takes place during her time of recollection in the Church, and specifically, she observes this vision through a large crystalline window under the canopy over the Eucharist, Úrsula reframes the Biblical parable to offer a syncretic understanding of justice.

At that time, I heard about the curse of the fig tree. Just as He cursed the tree, He cursed rebellious, stubborn sinners. In spite of all the warnings sinners receive and the benefits He gives them, he continues to wait for them, year after year . . .

When He realizes that the sinners do not wish to change their behavior, he curses them . . . (89).

In the first part of this description, Úrsula references the biblical typology of Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree. Typology is the “Christian tradition of reading contemporary events and actors as the fulfillment of older biblical episodes” (Cañizares-Esguerra 237). These typologies were conveyed in many ways in the baroque Catholic world. Specifically, visual representations encompassed polysemic ideologies and

symbols within a “limited space and from which networks of implications could be extracted by those familiar with the world of Christian iconography” (238). While Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra refers to visual culture, I suggest that we may read Úrsula’s mystic visions in a similar manner. Thus, in order to read Úrsula’s intertextual biblical reference and understand the typology to which she refers, first we need to examine the parable of the fig tree and its connection to the cleansing of the temple to interpret Úrsula’s syncretic vision.

While Úrsula’s vision does not mention the cleansing of the temples, she does reference Christ’s curse of the fig tree. Biblical scholars have highlighted the importance of reading Mark’s narrations in juxtaposition (Spivey 79). That is, Mark intercalates the story of Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree with the cleansing of the temple towards a unified meaning. Could this be a discursive tactic employed by Úrsula? Does she reference the cursing of the fig tree to intercalate the meaning with her own Afro-syncretic imagery?

In the book of Mark, the cursing of the fig tree takes place on Palm Sunday, just like in Úrsula’s vision. At the beginning of chapter 11, Christ orders his disciples to bring Him a donkey and its colt. This references the first part of Úrsula’s vision in which she expresses her desire to be Christ’s “poyto” in his mounting of the “pollino”. In the next portion of the parable, Jesus enters the city and admonishes the tax collectors in the Temple calling them thieves. Christ is restoring order and rebuking theft, not unlike Shango. In the next part of the chapter, Jesus awakens and is hungry. Approaching the tree, expecting fruit, but finding only leaves, Christ curses the tree: “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (Mark 11.14). The tree withers leaving the disciples astonished. Jesus replies:

Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them (Mark 11.23).

In order to interpret this, we need to first consider one Catholic meaning of the reference to this scripture. As previously stated, Mark commonly pairs seemingly disparate stories to generate one unified meaning. Thus, we need to consider the typology of the cursed fig tree alongside the cleansing of the temple. What unifies these parables is Jesus's anger at his followers' inconstancy. He is angry at seeing the Temple used as a "den for robbers" instead of a "house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11.17). He is angry at the tree for not bearing fruit, only leaves, even though it is out of season for figs (Mark 11.13). While one biblical scholar has suggested that it is a "gross injustice on a tree that was guilty of no wrong and had but performed its natural function" (Klausner cited in Spivey 80), it is important to consider what Christ demands of his followers -- constancy of faith and works. This is revealed when Christ remarks on the ability of a faithful Christian follower to command the movement of the mountain into the sea. This reference to the ability of the constant faithful Christian to have control over natural forces may be interpreted in a syncretic way, and I address that below. What is clear is the image of Christ's anger at his followers' inconstancy and weakness.

This image of anger is related to the image of anger in Úrsula's previous vision in which she highlights Christ's capacity to kill Judas and how Judas' betrayal invites enragement. In her Palm Sunday vision, this anger is reiterated and underscored by invoking the typology of the fig tree. This vision permits Úrsula to admonish her fellow nuns' inconstant and weak nature and critique religious hypocrisy. Thus we can read

Christ's anger towards these sinners, the tax collectors in the Temple and the fruitless tree -- metaphorically, inconstant Christians -- as a stand-in for Úrsula's anger at the hypocritical and sinful nature of Catholic imperial ideologies manifest in the exploitative process of the transatlantic slave system that abused bodies and souls in an unjust and anti-Christian manner.

Additionally, the image of the fig tree carries meaning with Afro-religious practice throughout the diaspora. Iroko is one of the most sacred trees for the Yorùbá and is associated with the male Orishá Iroko who dwells in the tree; this Orishá is associated with peace and works to settle disagreements with humans (Voeks 184). In the Americas, various species of fig trees stand in for the African Iroko (Voeks and Rashford 315). The fig tree is considered sacred among various African peoples and functions like an altar space for worship, prayer, sacrifice and offerings (Mbiti 51, Thompson 159). Thus, image of the fig tree in Úrsula's vision takes on a re-articulated meaning when considered from the perspective of the Yorùbá practitioner. The image of the sacred tree has a symbolic meaning for many Yorùbá faithful, specifically, with reference to Shango because his physical location is the base of the tree (Karade 30).

In addition to the importance of the image of the fig tree, the image of the sea carries paramount significance in Yorùbá tradition in diaspora with particular reference to the slave trade. When Úrsula references Christ's assurance to the ability of the faithful practitioner to command the mountain into the sea, we may read this reference as a point of departure and an intertextual tie to Yorùbá cosmology referencing the Yorùbá creation myth in which Olorun commands the earth into the sea. As part of the Yorùbá creation mythology, Olokun is the goddess of the deep sea (Lynch 99) and the protector of

African souls: “Olokun is also conceptualized as the deity representing the souls of all the descendants of Africans transferred from their homeland by ships sailing the Atlantic Ocean” (Peek 661). Moreover, in the Yorùbá creation myth, Olorun -- the Supreme Being -- controlled the Sky and was the creator of all other Orishás. Olokun controlled the watery depths and was the only Orishá to live apart from the others. When the earth was peopled, Olokun became angry at the loss of her domain and flooded the earth. Orunmila, the Orisha of wisdom and fate, came down to restore the earth. Olokun realized that she had lost control over her domain but still resisted Olorun. She baited Olorun into a contest. Eventually losing, she finally recognized Olorun’s supremacy (Lynch 100). Úrsula may have heard this or other Yorùbá creation myths as a member of a transculturated multi-ethnic community in colonial Lima. Thus, her vision and her reference to Christ’s cursing of the fig tree may be read as syncretic.

The Yorùbá creation myth may be related to Úrsula’s vision. Úrsula’s vision references Christ’s anger at the inability of his followers to keep the faith. By using Christ’s instruction in his fig tree parable as a link to Yorùbá cosmological precepts, we can read Úrsula’s vision in a new way. Christ’s reference to the ability of the Catholic faithful to command the mountain into the sea rearticulates the Yorùbá creation myth in which Olorun command the earth into the sea, Olokun’s realm. Olorun has the supernatural power to command the earth into the sea, this is the same power constant and faithful Christian followers have through Christ.

In Úrsula’s narration of her vision, she offers that Christ waits for the stubborn and rebellious sinners to change before cursing them: “he continues to wait for them, . . . When He realizes that the sinners do not wish to change their behavior, he curses

them”. However, unlike the Afro-religious Orishá Olokun, who did eventually change her ways, the Catholic hypocrites of Úrsula’s community continue to sin. The Yorùbá creation myth and the image of Christ’s cursing of the fig tree reveal the same message: The supernatural powers attributable to constant, faithful, strong followers who recognize their sin or wrongdoing and change their ways. However, in Úrsula’s vision the sinners do not recognize their wrongdoing, their laziness, inconstancy and hypocrisy and thus, “when they continue to sin He curses them.” What emerges at the end of this portion of the vision is God’s imminent curse for those unwilling to recognize their inconstancy and hypocrisy.

The last portion of Úrsula’s Palm Sunday vision should be read in direct juxtaposition to this previous portion in which Úrsula’s asserts God’s curse for the sinful. This last part of her Palm Sunday vision recounts Christ’s attitude about the disparate suffering of the body and the soul and their relationship to the earth. This overtly Catholic concept may also covertly relate an Afro-religious syncretic ideology. In the final part of Úrsula’s Palm Sunday vision, van Deusen has italicized the words, suggesting that they are Christ’s words:

[. . .] he also said that *just as souls are united with their bodies, so too are they united with the earth. Could I not see the agonies and travail experienced by those who were about to die? When bodies are uprooted from the earth, they suffer the same torment as when the soul is wrested from the body* (89).

Úrsula’s analogy between the body’s relationship to the earth and the soul’s relationship to the body may be read from a Yorùbá religious perspective. In the following discussion, first I outline the Yorùbá concept of a tripartite soul and its

relationship to the earth and the body. Then I interpret the above-cited portion of Úrsula's Palm Sunday vision taking into consideration Yorùbá cosmology. Reading Úrsula's description of the soul's relationship to the body in this way illuminates her Afro-Catholic practice.

Olorun, the Supreme God, assigns and controls human destinies (Bascom 33). The Yorùbá subscribe to reincarnation and multiple souls: the ancestral guardian soul, the breath soul, and the shadow soul. The ancestral guardian soul is the most important, it is associated with the individual's head or destiny. It is unknown to the practitioner during life but must be fed through sacrifices known as "feeding the head" (34). We may conceive of this ancestral soul as having the ability to talk to the practitioner's Orishá during a mounting experience, the trance or mystical experience used in Yorùbá practice to communicate to the Godhead. The second soul is the breath that resides in the nostrils, lungs and chest and is the vital life force that propels the individual to work and gives her life (34). Thirdly, there is the shadow soul, which one can feel, but that requires no nourishment. This soul follows the individual throughout life (34).

Before becoming linked to the body, the ancestral soul kneels before the Supreme God and exercises her free will to choose her own destiny. If she asks humbly and if her request is reasonable, the Supreme God grants that destiny, placing her ancestral soul in the body (34). At this point, one's personality, luck, occupation and the fixed date of death is determined.

At death the multiple souls leave the body and normally reach heaven, remaining there until the ancestral guardian soul is reincarnated. Persons who die before

their time, remain on the earth as ghosts staying in distant towns where they will not be recognized until the day appointed by Olorun arrives, when they “die” a second death and go to heaven depending upon their behavior on the earth. When the three souls reach heaven, Olorun assigns them to the “good heaven” or the “bad heaven” (35).

The Yorùbá belief about the three distinct kinds of souls shifts the way we can understand Úrsula’s Palm Sunday vision, in which she describes the pain and agony she can see in the souls that are wrested from their bodies and the bodies that are uprooted from the earth. If we envision the Tridentine image of God -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit -- as a kind of syncretized Yorùbá Supreme God, we see that He (Christ) curses those to “bad heaven” if they continue to sin. Thus, it is an individual’s behavior that links her to earth. Úrsula articulates a Yorùbá cosmological belief when she invokes Christ’s voice to inform that souls are united to the body in the same way that souls are united to earth before birth. When Christ asks rhetorically about his ability to see an individual’s pain and agony before death, we might read this statement as Úrsula’s *imitatio christi*. Úrsula’s journal attests to her role as intercessor. She sees those about to die, she sees the dead and she sees their pain and agony. Finally, in the last portion of Úrsula’s Palm Sunday vision, in alignment with Yorùbá cosmology, Úrsula articulates two “deaths” of the soul: the body leaving the earth and the soul leaving the body. Úrsula’s ability to see souls gains a new meaning when we consider this Catholic convention in juxtaposition to Yorùbá religious practice.

Conclusion

Úrsula de Jesús walked the path of the female visionary mystic in early modern Lima. In each step along her path, she used her body to perform her role as a religious mystic and intermediary for purgatorial voices in her baroque Catholic community. In kissing the hands of Christ, she manipulated the repertoire of female sanctity and positioned herself alongside iconic religious foremothers. She incorporated herself in Lima's religious history. Her story and her visions resonate through popular Limeña cultural as well as early modern academic discourse. As Taylor describes, she entered into social memory by using her body as a site of convergence between the private and public, individual and collective and the synchronic and diachronic. For example, Úrsula's vision in which his kisses the hands of Christ was her private, individual and momentarily singular lived experience in the convent of Santa Clara. However, Úrsula reframes this experience by referencing her spiritual foremothers Saint Gertrude and Catherine of Siena. In linking her individual experience to these icons she transforms her individual experience and others' perceptions of her experience. Her vision became public as it was diffused and circulated within the convent walls. Thus, in referencing these icons Úrsula's memory becomes public, collective and permeates across time. Úrsula became famous in her own time and in her own community because she used her body to perform revered acts of religious piety that composed the repertoire of female sanctity thus manipulating the trope of the female visionary mystic. She reframed her own visionary experiences.

Her spiritual journal documents this performance and recounts her slave experience as an exploited body in early modern Lima. Her writings are unique: they

highlight her experiences as black freedwoman, a *donada* and exploited slave body that labored and suffered within her religious community. Úrsula used her visions to construct her fame and created meaningfulness in her own life through her interactions with those living and dead. As van Deusen points out, she filtered the practices of everyday life through the lens of her own subjectivity (58). Úrsula “envisioned an egalitarian world where God privileged goodness, while still acknowledging the incongruities of a racialized existence in colonial society” (58). Úrsula’s spiritual journal may be read as an attempt to construct meaning in her racially stratified early modern world.

I suggest that what emerges from a close reading is not the envisioning of an egalitarian afterlife in which God privileges goodness. Úrsula’s journal offers a reading in which the afterlife rewards work and punishes idleness and hypocrisy. The rectifying forces of Divine justice mete out mild punishments, rewarding those who suffered and toiled on earth. In Úrsula’s visions, slaves are remembered and rewarded for their work. Hypocritical, idle and lazy white religious and ruling elite are punished. Úrsula restructures the racial and social ordering in the after world to compensate for the imbalance in her present surroundings and to construct her own identity as God’s servant and mystic in the Convent of Santa Clara of early modern Lima. Úrsula’s descriptions of her visions works within the established framework for women writers; she uses the rhetoric of humility and concession. She imported the framework of scenarios from exemplar religious women to construct meaning in her daily life as a laboring and exploited slave. Úrsula reframed the trope of the female mystic to diffuse her unique cultural and personal memories of suffering. Her use of the image of purgatory

showcases her performance of a mystic identity within their religious communities. Thus, by manipulating the repertoire of female sanctity and in accordance with Pauline didacticism, Úrsula transformed herself from a slave of men to a servant of God.

Within this religious space, couched in Catholic rhetoric and discourse, Úrsula's visions foster a reading of her journey on another path, and Afro-Catholic, or syncretic, walk. When we shift the ideological lens to consider the cosmological underpinnings and symbolism of Oyo-Yorùbá religious worship, an image of a Afro-syncretic biblical typology emerges. Úrsula's spiritual journal fosters an interpretation in which she is a Yorùbá priestess who envisions herself engaged in a spiritual mounting with a conflated Christ/Oxalá Orishá. She incorporates various images of the Oyo-Yorùbá spirituality and intertwines this imagery with overt Catholic images.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHICABA'S HIDDEN ORIKI -- A Yorùbá Interpretation of her
Catholic Practice

“Poco es lo que digo porque lo que ocultó Teresa, fue mucho” (Paniagua 201). This is the penultimate sentence in *Compendio de la Vida Exemplar de la Venerable Madre Sor Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo*, written by Theatine Father Juan Carlos Miguel Paniagua. Paniagua compiled Teresa’s, or rather, Chicaba’s -- her West African name -- story. First printed in 1752, and reprinted in 1764, Chicaba’s hagiography -- her religious biography -- is framed and told by Paniagua, who was her spiritual confessor in the last two years of her life (Maeso 13). To compose her story, Paniagua relied upon Chicaba’s confessions, as well as her writings. However, her autobiographical *vida* and her correspondence with her previous spiritual confessors were destroyed in a convent fire (Houchins and Fra-Molinero, “Teresa Chicaba” 542). Paniagua also relied upon the official Catholic source *Actas del Capítulo Provincial de los Dominicos celebrado en Toro (Zamora), en 1749* (Maeso 13) to draft his narrative. In the *Compendio*’s dedication to Saint Vincent Ferrer, Paniagua claims the impetus to write Chicaba’s hagiography resulted from the printing of Chicaba’s funerary sermon, *Sermón de las Exequias que se celebraron en el convento de la Penitencia, el 9 de enero de 1749*. This also served as a source for his narrative construction. From these sources, Paniagua details Chicaba’s supernatural and divine encounters in her West African homeland, he describes her captivity and enslavement, he depicts her labor and life in the household of the Marquesa of Mancera in Madrid, and he discusses her conventual and communal service as a Dominican third order servant in the Convent of

Mary Magdalene in Salamanca, known as La Penitencia, relating her love for Christ, recounting her death and recording its associated miracles.

Paniagua filters Chicaba's story through a male Catholic lens. He frames his narration to reveal the Divine Hand of Christian Providence in the unfolding of Chicaba's story. Her suffering, her mystical experiences and her fame are appropriated by this Catholic narrative structure. Authorized, licensed, printed and distributed by Catholic hands, her story becomes a model for religious behavior. Chicaba was renowned in her community of Salamanca as a prophetic healer and visionary (Paniagua 177, 180). But her own narrative is hidden. As Paniagua points out, what he says is little compared to what Chicaba hid about her story.

In *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987), Hayden White asks, "Has any historical narrative ever been written that was not informed not only by the moral awareness but specifically by the moral authority of the narrator?" (21). Chicaba's story is informed by Paniagua's moral awareness and specifically his moral Catholic authority. In this chapter, I reframe Chicaba's story. I consider the ways in which the events of Chicaba's life, her spiritual experiences and her words, may hide an Afro-syncretic religious meaning. In Chicaba's time, Paniagua constructed her story informed by the moral precepts of the Catholic Church in the throes of Tridentine Reform (Hudon 7). I use Paniagua's descriptions of Chicaba's experiences to recast them as evidence of her Yorùbá belief system and Afro-Catholic practice. I do not suggest that Chicaba was not a devout Catholic but that her Catholic practice is multilayered and syncretic. Filtered through Yorùbá religious constructs, Chicaba's

Catholic worship takes on a differentiated meaning that reveals her unique subject position as an Afro-Catholic in the early modern Spanish religious setting.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Chicaba's hagiography addressing Paniagua's authorial tone and its relationship to the agenda of the Theatine order. I recount some of Chicaba's visions and descriptions of her devout religious practice that functioned to foster her identity as a prophetic mystic. I connect Chicaba to the Yorùbá Diaspora and outline Yorùbá cosmological beliefs and practices as they relate to Chicaba's experiences and practices. In a manner similar to Stephanie Merrim in her reading of the Mexican Archive in Sor Juana's *Divino Narciso*, I provide a close reading and interpretation of the multiplicitous, indirect, hidden and rarely explicit intertextual Yorùbá meanings in the descriptions of Chicaba's religious experiences and Catholic practice.

Chicaba: A Brief Biography

According to her hagiography, Chicaba was born to royal parents in West Africa near the year 1676. She had three older brothers but was the only daughter of this royal family. Her people worshipped a bright star. However, Chicaba had intuitively always questioned this practice believing there was a higher power, the true Creator of the star her people worshipped. Chicaba enjoyed nature and solitude often spending her time in the meadows of her homeland. She was a renowned healer in her community and her people prized and adored her. During one of her outings and prior to her encounter with the Spanish, Chicaba received a mystical baptism. When she was about ten years old, Chicaba was enslaved. Purportedly, Chicaba was wearing gold bracelets and the time of her capture, which signaled her extreme value. She was shipped to Santo Tomé and

received her official Catholic baptism and the name Teresa. After the ship was provisioned, she was transported to Seville to be sold.

Her story unfolds in almost a Job-like fashion: Teresa entreats Providence's protection and direction in her life because of her inherent godly sensibilities, and consequently, incites the Devil's rage. Paniagua writes to illustrate how Teresa's conversion and adherence to Catholic precepts makes her God's jewel. Her story is the veritable hidden treasure for evangelists -- through divine power an African girl's transformation administers the Good News to all unbelievers. At its heart, Chicaba's hagiography is another articulation of Just War ideological discourse that emphasizes the value of the soul over the value of the body, which enables the extension and perpetuation of the Atlantic slave trade. Chicaba's adversities become demonic plotments rather than the results of human agency.

In the chapters of her *Compendio*, Paniagua often describes the harrowing realities of Chicaba's suffering and then concludes with a description of Chicaba's pleasant memories, which he interprets as God's blessings in her life. For example, at her moment of captivity he describes her great thirst, suffocation, overwhelming sense of sorrow, and desire to throw herself overboard. Coupled with this harrowing description of suffering, is the description of the satiating force of a glass of water, the care the sailors showed to protect her, and finally the apparition of a mystical goddess described as the Holy Mother by Paniagua. This ordering of her captivity narrative may be read in at least two ways. First, Chicaba relates her captivity narrative to her confessors at various times, over various years, culminating, with her description of this narrative to Paniagua at the end of her life. Her organization of the order of the events of her captivity narrative may

be read as a coping mechanism. This paradoxical repositioning of traumatic memory coupled with positive thoughts mimics the way in which the individual psyche assimilates and interpretes trauma so as to cope effectively with reality and discharge the negative emotions of trauma (Levine 203). In one of the initial chapters of her story, Chicaba describes how she is attacked by crows on the deck of the slave ship, how they rip and gouge her flesh. Her Spanish slavers carry her below deck to secure her from harm. This choice to emphasize the sailors' role as her protectors rather than as her captors may be seen as one coping mechanism for traumatic memory.

Additionally, upon her arrival in Seville, she is greeted by members of the nobility and hosted in a noble household. They offer her wonderful treats and snacks. There she sees the display of Catholic icons and she begins the routine of tea parties and conversations with these Catholic personages. Chicaba may have emphasized a sympathetic and comforting welcoming in the noble's household upon arrival in Spain to offset the intense trauma of the Atlantic transport. These memories most likely were re-imagined. Chicaba may have experienced a comforting scenario with Catholic iconography at some point in her early life in Spain but most likely not upon her arrival in Seville. More probable is that she remembers them in this order to compensate for the horrific trauma of her capture and enslavement experience. Assuredly, Teresa's gold bracelets were stolen by the sailors on her slave ship. Probably, she was sold at auction in Seville alongside other wares and precious commodities, and possibly, her owners took her to court perhaps as entertainment for the King. Yet, there is another way to read this narrative. In Paniagua's narrative, Chicaba is cared for and protected by those she meets from the moment of her capture until her death, especially by the religiously devout

Spanish nobility. Thus, Paniagua's ordering of her captivity narrative describes Spanish actors, sailors and nobility, as helping hands for Divine Providence. This description distracts from the harsh reality of Chicaba's slave experience.

I juxtapose these two ways of reading and interpreting Chicaba's captivity narrative to highlight the highly mediated genre of the hagiography. The overt and intended message is clear: Chicaba was chosen by God's Hand to become the Catholic Icon for African assimilation to Christian norms and representative of the value of Just War ideology. This is how her story was to be read in the eighteenth century and this is how we overtly read it today. However, here, I offer another way to read Chicaba's hagiography -- her officially approved religious biography. To reframe Chicaba's experience and suggest an Afro-Catholic interpretation of her official story, I read the order and structure of her hagiography as an indirect means of inserting her own story. Admittedly, reading Chicaba's enslavement and mystical experience descriptions in this way is at best tenuous. I emphasize the possible alternate, unofficial, indirect and embedded meanings discernable in the text. Chicaba had been indoctrinated and partially culturally assimilated into Catholic baroque Spanish society. She knew she had to frame her story in a way palatable to Catholic readers. Thus, whatever African-Yorùbá references she may have made would have been exceedingly covert, moreso than, either Úrsula's or Rosa's use of syncretic imagery. I read the order and the structure of Chicaba's highly mediated text to relate a counter-Catholic narrative. In the following sections, I highlight circumstantial and speculative evidence to pose more questions than answers. Overall, this chapter questions the validity of the Catholic narrative constructed by Paniagua. His agenda was to use Chicaba as a symbol for African submission to

Catholic imperial agendas. My agenda is to offer a counter discourse. I re-read the official text, practicing in radical difference, to offer an “elaboration of insurgency”. It is most likely that Chicaba did not tell and retell her story in this way to elicit this kind of reading, an Afro-Catholic elaboration of religious practice. But what if she did? This chapter details possibilities and highlights paths of inquiry and suggestions for further research that may permit a more substantiated account of Chicaba’s overt manipulation of Catholic discourse to embed her Yorubá cosmological precepts in her descriptions of her worship practices.

Chicaba’s story unfolds within the noble Spanish setting. Chicaba is placed in the Marquis of Mancera’s household. Interestingly, the Marquis of Mancera had been the Viceroy in Mexico City and his first wife had been Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s benefactor and protector. Chicaba is situated within a noble household that could be seen as supportive of radical religious practice. Sor Juana was a renowned writer and poet within her own time. Her writings addressed intellectual debates and theological discourse. This was out of ordinary for female religious in the seventeenth century. Moreover, Sor Juana incorporated many images of New World religious practice, specifically, Aztec or Mexica references alongside classical and Egyptian references to construct a unique baroque criolla voice. Because Chicaba was placed within this unique noble household, a household with experience living in the New World and a reputation for supporting emergent non-traditional discourse, perhaps Chicaba may have had a higher degree of autonomy and given more latitude with regards to her spiritual pursuits than slaves in other noble Spanish households. King Carlos II understood the Marquis’s predilection for foreigners and houses Chicaba with him and

his second wife, the Marquesa Teresa Juliana de Portocarrero. It was in this household that Chicaba was treated more as a beloved child than a slave. She was educated and given time to devote to her religious practice. This privilege incurred the envy of the other household slaves and Teresa Chicaba was subjected to much harassment and torment, attributed by Paniagua as demonic intents. During her time in the household, Teresa Chicaba came under the guidance and tutelage of various spiritual directors. She became renowned for her humility, patience, and healing powers. She eventually became the spiritual counsel for the Marquis and the Marquesa.

Upon the Marquesa's death in 1703, Chicaba was freed, as was the custom for many religiously devout slave owners in Spain at the time. Chicaba was promised a stipend from the Marquesa's estate provided she enter religious service. Aided by her Catholic directors, Chicaba tried to secure a position in a religious house. However, her racial status was an obstacle for her admittance into official Catholic religious life. Eventually, she secured a place in the Convent of Mary Magdalene in Salamanca. She was accepted into the Dominican Third Order. She was not permitted to officially profess but she was permitted a ceremony in which she donned the habit. This was another of Chicaba's mystical experiences where she envisioned four choruses of religious female hosts welcoming her into the religious life. In this vision, Paniagua records how Chicaba clearly remembered two of the female faces in particular. Upon describing them to the other religious women in the convent, she ascertained that the faces she had envisioned had belonged to two revered pious women in that same convent who had recently died. Significantly, Chicaba notes that the faces left not one trace of hypocrisy: "pero en las dos [caras] sobresalía mucho más que en las otras, la afabilidad

sin afectación, la compostura exterior sin átomos de hipocresía, la alegría de sus caras tanto más distinta de las otras” (Paniagua 113). This description of her vision during her acceptance into the convent by the mystical apparitions may be read as a critique of the hypocritical faces of the women at her admittance into the convent. By describing the visionary faces as accepting, and by omitting a description of the faces of the living women, Chicaba implies the hypocrisy of the living women in the convent.

During Chicaba’s life in the convent she became a famous healer and mystical prophet. She foretold futures and accessed the supernatural realm through her visions. Her hagiography details scenarios of her piety and her care for other women in her community as well as her healing and prophetic practices in which she saves the lives of many individuals. Paniagua details her sickness and ailing in her declining years and describes her as the suffering servant of Christ up until her death in December of 1748. While few people actually attended her burial, her funeral mass in which Paniagua presented his sermon in honor of her life was attended by many prominent individuals in Salamanca in January of 1749.

From Chicaba To Teresa: Establishing Catholic Authority

In the beginning of Chicaba’s story, Paniagua highlights the *It-factor* in her hagiography, not only for early modern readers, but for present day readers as well: What is *It* about this African woman that makes her worthy of Catholic emulation? The primary trace of her West African narrative is the color of her face and, Chicaba, herself, is the only remaining witness to her story.

[. . .] porque lo incógnito de la tierra, lo distante de su clima, escasea más y más en su distancia las noticias y a no haberlas dado la misma Madre Teresa, de todo

punto se hubieran escondido a nuestros ojos, porque muertos los que la trajeron en su nave, fallecidos los Marqueses de Mancera, todos sus criados y familia, patria y padres de Teresa se hubieran quedado en la región del olvido y sólo por su rostro, anduviéramos rastreando su nativo suelo (31).

At the outset of her story, Paniagua admits that Chicaba is the sole surviving source of her transformation narrative from African slave to devout Catholic mystic. Paniagua suggests that all other witnesses to her story are gone and forgotten, leaving Chicaba's face as the only trace to her experiences. Consistent with Hayden White's critical assertions about narrativity, reality, and authority, Paniagua's position as author validates Chicaba's history, and simultaneously justifies her role in constructing her own story of transformation. White points out the relationship between the structure of the narrative and the value of objective historical discourse that historians have conferred onto that structure. He affirms that historians have "transformed narrativity from a manner of speaking into a paradigm of the form that reality itself displays to a 'realistic' consciousness" (25). Writers narrate and shape an experience by making it seem to conform to what is understood as real, displaying characteristics of reality. The story, or history, seems to coincide with the structure and format of the metanarrative -- the assumed template for meaning construction and event sequence shared by a culture. The narrativity of a text takes on a value that translates to a perception of being real and thus objective when in fact narration is far from objective. White assures readers that "where there is any account of reality, narrativity is present" (24). Moreover, he emphasizes the paradoxical nature of the self-conscious fashioning activity and the decrease in its objectivity (18). As a writer illustrates her awareness in the construction of the story and

the writing process, the objective value of the text diminishes. Yet by the same self-aware process the writer may also establish her own authority. By establishing her authority the writer legitimates her truth claims of the narrative (19). Thus, in Chicaba's hagiography Paniagua's clerical authority and his Catholic framing of Chicaba's slave and mystic experiences presents his account as true and objective for his early modern readers. For these readers, Chicaba's subject position as a redeemed slave and Catholic prophetic mystic legitimates her authority.

In detailing her first contact with Divine Providence, Paniagua's narration and ordering of the scenarios work to construct the image of Chicaba, first as a slave then as a mystic. Paniagua constructs the narrative of Chicaba's life to illustrate God's possession of Chicaba and her incipient submission to His will. Her hagiography establishes her authority as a mystic but also attests to her experience as an exploited slave. The veracity of her story is acceptable because of its careful construction to portray the role of Divine Providence in the slave's salvation.

In chapter one, Paniagua writes that Chicaba was chosen among thousands by the hand of God (Houchins and Fra Molinero 223). Then he writes that she could not help but be black because that is the color "wise nature painted" her people (223) underscoring God's hand in ascribing her ethnicity, images of wisdom and nature were both classically associated with the characteristics of God. Paniagua's authorial tone and his narrative construction of Chicaba as a redeemed slave align with the objectives of the Theatine order. The Theatines were committed to their own individual sanctification and the service of others through active Christian charity (Hudon 17). The order had much in common with late-medieval religiosity and takes its origins from the Roman branch of

the Oratory of Divine Love that focused on the importance of service to others and the need for penance. They were dedicated to personal reform and had a reputation for holiness that fueled their revision and improvement of early-modern clerical practices (28). Theatines eventually gained Papal favor and were frequently chosen for positions of episcopal administration. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they became increasingly involved in missionary activity. Paniagua writes from this position. He highlights Chicaba's service to others and her dedication to penance and suffering. Perhaps, writing Chicaba's narrative offered him an opportunity to detail what he perceived to be the highlights of the missionary lifestyle, bringing foreigners into the Christian fold. From Paniagua's perspective, Chicaba from a young age was dedicated to personal reform and holiness, a perfect Theatine subject for a religious biography and coming to Christ story.

Chicaba's Yorùbá Connections

Adhering to hagiographic tradition, Paniagua describes Chicaba's place of origin and her lineage. After signaling his perception of the obvious evidence of her origins -- her black face -- in the first paragraph of her story, he suggests she is from Guinea. In chapter one, I discuss the vagueness of the term Guinea to describe Chicaba's birthplace. This terminological inexactitude did not go unnoticed by Paniagua: "Es la Guinea una de las más dilatadas y vasta provincias que en sí contienen los anchuroso términos de la Africa" (31). To support my Yorùbá religious interpretation of Chicaba's visions and practices, it is important to underscore the following points. Sister Maria Eugenia Maeso investigates Chicaba's origins and meaning of her name, suggesting that "Chikaba es un vocablo Igbo, tribu de Nigeria" (19). Her investigation reveals the unique meanings of

the syllables that construct Chicaba's name: "Chi" meaning God and "Kaba" the future tense of the verb "to say" (19). She also highlights an alternative meaning of "Kaba" -- the future tense of "to decide" (20). Thus, Chicaba's name means, "I will tell of God" or perhaps, "I will decide about God". It is hard to say at what point Chicaba revealed her name to her captors. It is possible she constructed this name herself after becoming somewhat culturally assimilated to her Catholic baroque environment. If, however, we accept this as her given African name and its possible Igbo origins, then Chicaba's people shared in the Yorùbá network of material culture and its religious belief system of divination known as Ifa.

As I discuss in chapter one, I use the term Pan-Yorùbá to refer the peoples who shared the same cultural origins claiming to be descendents of Oduduwa. In his discussion of the cultural history of the Yorùbá-Edo peoples, Akinwumi Ogundiran details the emergence and rise to prominence of Ile-Ife as the Yorùbá socio-political and religious center in West Africa. Anthropologists suggest that in the Late Formative Period, 800 AD to 1000 AD, Oduduwa was personified by the Yorùbá-Edo people as the cultural faction that worked for a centralized political structure and an urban center. In contrast, Obatala was personified as the cultural faction that valued a confederacy of smaller farming villages. Obatala has been represented as the autochthonous Igbo group in the oral histories of Ile-Ife, the cultural epicenter for the emergence of the Yorùbá-Edo peoples. The Oduduwa group won out, absorbing many of the Obatala members and becoming the mythical progenitor of the Yorùbá-Edo peoples (Ogundiran 45). The religious mystical divination practice of the Yorùbá peoples known as Ifa (Bascom, *Ifa*

Divination 3) can be traced to the growing cultural and economic significance of the urban center Ile-Ife during the Classical Period, 1000 AD to 1400 AD (Ogundiran 56).

The universal cosmology espoused by the politico-religious institutions at Ile-Ife, through the elaboration of the ideas of kinship and the complexity of religion, rituals and worldview, made it the center of the Yorùbá-Edo world system and a magnet for the populations of the surrounding region (Ogundiran 57).

As time passed, the economic, political and material culture changed to represent the relationships between the various peoples of West Africa connected in part by river trade and in part by shared cosmological religious values. The evidence of material cultural artifacts such as clay pots, brass, and glass beads tells the stories of the connections between these various African peoples and their circulating knowledges, ideologies and religious practices. “These changes even led to the creation of new deities, redefinition of the old ones, and restructuring of the pantheons in order to accommodate the new economic conditions within the parameters of Yorùbá-Edo cosmology” (Ogundiran 65). For example, in the wake of the Atlantic Period and because of the importance of cloth in trade, women emerged as brokers of economic and subsequently religious influence. This explains why the deities associated with Atlantic commerce in Yorùbáland are of female identity (Ogundiran 65).

As I develop my analysis of Chicaba’s hagiography in the following sections, I base my questions and interpretations of Paniagua’s text on the assumption that Chicaba came from West Africa and had knowledge of Yorùbá religious practice. Whether she had been captured somewhere in Guinea, was a member of the Igbo people or any other group in the region, or was from one of the prominent slave trading posts linked to the

Oyo-Yorùbá (Yorùbá-Edo) internal slave trade, she would have been acculturated and predisposed to Yorùbá cosmological religious ideologies that highlighted the power of the pantheon of Pan-Yorùbá Orishás. Specifically, because of the importance of Atlantic commerce and the slave trade, Chicaba as a young girl may have had a special affinity for the female Orishá in her Yorùbá religious system, such as Yemoja.

The Compendio: A Close Reading

In the first chapter, Paniagua works to establish Chicaba's lineage as noble, she is the only daughter of the King of her land, and he highlights the color of her skin as natural to her environment. However, he then suggests that while it is natural for the inhabitants of her land to be so dark, what is darker still, is their pagan religious practice of worshiping nature, or rather the stars: "Mas aunque tan oscuros sus aspectos, eran mucho más negros sus ánimos. Adoraban ciegos al lucero de la mañana. Para sus cultos y sacrificios, ni usaban ni tenían templos, sino que previniendo estrella, salían muy temprano a adorarla" (32).

Importantly, Paniagua uses this description to construct Chicaba's Catholic disposition from an early age. In this first chapter of the *Compendio*, he establishes two dark categories: the color of the inhabitants' skin, which is natural and out of their control, and the darkness of their spirits -- ánimos --, which they do control. This is clear when he begins the next chapter: "Más varias son las afecciones del ánimo, que los lineamientos del rostro" (33). He constructs these two categories to illustrate to his readers the importance of Chicaba's nature: her control over her spirit in contrast to her lack of control over her skin color.

In chapter two, Paniagua describes Chicaba's people's understanding of worship and cites that it was corrected by the arrival of Capuchin missionaries (Houchins and Fra Molinero 225). This detail illustrates Hayden White's assertion that the form of the content is more important than the content itself. It is more important to illustrate the eventual salvation of Chicaba's heathen people in order to justify the enslavement of both her body and her soul as the course of Divine Providence. The narration of Chicaba's conversion to Christianity as preordained also works to justify her enslavement.

Paniagua continues in the hagiographic tradition to describe how Chicaba was not disposed to childish things and worked to find places of solitude where she could contemplate the true nature of God. Seeking out a secret place to commune with God is a common trope in female hagiographies. Moreover, he describes how she doubts that the star could have been the True God and how she questions the validity of her African cosmology in a dialogue with her father.

Todo dudas, todo confusiones, en tanta variedad de afectos batallaba esta niña dentro de sí propio, por no descubrir la Causa primera que con ansia investigaba y, determinada de una vez a salir de duda, le preguntó al padre, con balbuciente lengua, ¿quién era el Dios a quien reverenciaba? No le satisfizo la respuesta que la dio su padre, con que se avivó en ella más el ansia de hacer cuantas diligencias pudiese para conocer, quién era este Dios Poderoso . . . la niña se mantuvo prudente en su reflexiva pregunta: Aquella estrella, decía, con lengua balbuciente, está como una de todas las otras, quien puso aquella estrella en el cielo, puso las demás en aquel sitio, pues quien la colocó allí y repartió las demás

en su puesto ha de ser forzosamente más poderoso que todas ella y por consiguiente el Autor Supremo (34, 35).

This questioning of her father works in various ways. It illustrates Chicaba's piety and wisdom and her awareness of the false gods worshipped by her countrymen. Also, it weakens the authority of her father and it highlights the illogic of pagan beliefs. Overall, this narrative supports the Catholic practice of evangelization in the African continent. Just in these first two chapters of Chicaba's hagiography, Paniagua's moral authority and Catholic narrative framing is clear. He highlights Chicaba's free will, her spirit, and her desire to question the values of her African homeland. He describes her pattern of looking for solitude in distant meadows. Paniagua frames Chicaba's desire to question her African faith as the driving force in her life. Thus, when we read about her capture by the Spanish slave ship in chapter six, as I describe in chapter one of this dissertation, we understand that it was really Chicaba's own desire to leave her homeland and pursue God's calling that brought her into captivity.

However, there are various significant experiences and visions that occur to Chicaba prior to her encounter with the Spanish ship. Thus, while Paniagua foreshadows the Catholic image of God in Chicaba's childhood, we must assume from the sequence of events that those supernatural experiences that lead up to her contact with Catholicism are described with the moral agenda of highlighting God's hand in Chicaba's path away from Africa. In the following section, I summarize the Catholic rendition of Chicaba's experiences in Africa prior to her enslavement and then offer an alternate Yorùbá reading of these mystical experiences.

In chapter three, Paniagua suggests that because of her wisdom beyond her years Chicaba was considered an oracle (37). He continues to describe her ability to heal the sick and that she would be carried to the homes of the infirm where, upon laying her hands on the lame, they were healed. It is important to note how Paniagua conveys this information. First, he relates that this information emanates from Chicaba herself: “Consta por relación de la misma Venerable madre” (38). Next, he underscores the validity of her healing power in citing one of her previous spiritual directors: “*Según fidedignas deposiciones, sabemos la llevaba a los enfermos y con ponerlos la mano sobre la cabez, los dejaba sanos*” (38). Then, Paniagua goes as far as to compare Chicaba to the martyred Saint Vincent Ferrer (38).

After describing her ability to heal the sick, Paniagua reiterates again Chicaba’s desire to be alone in her meadow. He describes an incident where, being far off from her retinue, she was captured by barbarous African enemies. She was saved by her father’s soldiers and returned unharmed. However, this caused her parents to forbid her from leaving the palace. It is important to note that Paniagua uses language to describe Chicaba’s royal palace and royal entourage in Spanish terms. His tone permits the reader to envision a royal setting comparable to Spanish nobility. However, he had previously described African religious practice as primitive and without official spaces to worship, such as temples. It is significant that Paniagua works to highlight Chicaba’s political, as well as, biological or natural origins as comparable to European standards but deficient with respect to religious practice. Thus, Chicaba intuitively yearned for the Catholic god because she inherently recognized the gods of her African people as false. Paniagua describes Chicaba’s enclosure in her royal palace as pure anguish. Chicaba would not

rest until she was permitted to return to her meadow -- her space of solitude. Chicaba won over her parents and was permitted to venture out of the palace as long as she were accompanied by a sufficiently large entourage. It was during one of these excursions that experienced her first supernatural encounter.

In chapter four, Paniagua describes Chicaba's baptism and her Christian naming - - Chicaba is now known as Teresa -- by an angel in a crystalline fountain located in the heart of her own nation and the simultaneous apparition of the Mother and Child. He describes her vision of the Child dangling a bright ribbon that Chicaba continually tries to grab but cannot reach. Paniagua details Chicaba's memory of the white faces of the Mother and Child (Houchins and Fra Molinero 227). These images of ties, dangling ribbons, and white faces, may represent Chicaba's understanding of the forces contrived to ensure her capture or they may provide details about the Yorùbá Orishá Chicaba encountered near the water.

Paniagua relates that one day she was off by herself in a meadow, far from her entourage, when she came upon a crystalline fountain and "embelesada según su costumbre, vio lo que vio, pues ella sola se lo supo" (42). Here, Paniagua places Chicaba next to water and affirms that Chicaba only knows what she saw. He does not continue to immediately describe this encounter in detail but instead offers the testimony of one of her previous spiritual directors: "*en una de estas estaciones . . . la bautizaron estando al pie de una fuente y pusieron el nombre de Teresa, que después la dieron también, cuando la bautizaron el Puerto de Santo Tomé*" (42). This illustrates that Chicaba had two baptisms, one in Africa prior to her encounter with the Spanish slave ship and the second

at the slave port of Santo Tomé. Paniagua elaborates upon the nebulous quality or inexactness of this supernatural encounter, writing

Hasta aquí su director. Quién fue el ministro, ni lo dice, ni lo explica; pero habiendo sido el lance cierto, que fuese un ángel no lo dudará el docto, pues en todo el reino entonces no había quien pudiese administrárselo (42).

Paniagua uses the authorial and administrative voice of the official cleric to support the Catholic rendition of an angel as the baptizing force in Chicaba's experience. However, following his initial introduction to this narration, we know that only Chicaba really knew what happened. Paniagua continues his narration informing that while this experience had assuaged Chicaba's longing to understand the true nature of God, and while she had felt some sense of relief, albeit in a hidden way given her youth, it was God who had acted to give her a clear sign as to His true nature -- the source of her yearning. Paniagua's narration of Chicaba's virgin mystical experience hides more than it reveals. His narration places Chicaba at the center of the story and highlights her authoritative position as the verifiable source of this supernatural encounter, but in doing so, he either misses or suppresses the Yorùbá religious imagery that is evident to a contemporary scholar. In the following section I analyze this vision in detail discussing its Catholic significance as well as its Yorùbá religious imagery.

Chicaba's Baptism as Biblical Typology

Around 1686, Chicaba arrived in Seville and was taken to the Marquis de Mancera's household in Madrid when she was about ten years old. It is impossible to know when exactly she first divulged her baptismal story to her spiritual confessors, but it is safe to assume it was after she had been at least partially acculturated or socially

assimilated into baroque Catholic society. At the very least, she had learned Spanish well enough to describe with some awareness of Catholic details her mystical experience. We might assume that Paniagua's description of this story comes after it had been told many times to various spiritual confessors. Thus, to what degree Chicaba detailed this version during her counsel with Paniagua near the end of her life is not known. However, because Paniagua's asserts that only Chicaba really knew her story and offers a vague interpretation from the perspective of a previous spiritual confessor, his text permits the reader to interpret this detailed Catholic vision as the one Chicaba told to Paniagua at the end of her life. Thus, we may read this description of her African baptism and mystical vision of the Mother and Child as a manipulation of Catholic discourse. Chicaba's final version of this encounter incorporates Catholic symbolism into her vision and at the same time embeds or hides a deeper meaning to the story.

It is significant that this experience takes place in Africa. It is also significant that the preceding description of the African baptism situates the narrative within an ambiguous Catholic space. What clearly emerges from the description is Chicaba's encounter with a crystalline *fuentes*. Perhaps it was a vision of a fountain or perhaps a river or a spring. At the foot of this fountain, someone, or more accurately, multiple someones, as suggested by the use of the third person plural, baptize and name Teresa. The significance of this pre-Spanish, or mystic African baptism may be read in at least two ways. It prefigures her Catholic destiny and/or it undercuts her Catholic baptism, suggesting her authentic religious baptism took place in Africa during a mystical experience near water, which may be interpreted as a sacred place for the Orishá Yemoja, Goddess of fresh water and fertility. Yorùbá religious practice includes giving a pot

filled with sacred water “to barren women begging for children from Yemoja” (Awolalu 46). While the expressed purpose of this chapter is to elaborate a Yorùbá interpretation of Chicaba’s story, reading for the hidden intertextuality with Yorùbá religious cosmology, it is important to recognize the overt Catholic intertextuality so as to uncover the hidden meanings contained within Chicaba’s narration.

Catholic intertextuality, and my reading for Yorùbá intertextual references, can be placed into the category of biblical typologies. Typology is the “Christian tradition of reading contemporary events and actors as the fulfillment of older biblical episodes” (237). Typologies were conveyed through visual representation in baroque Catholic discourse, encompassing polysemic ideologies and symbols. In the seventeenth century readers understood Biblical stories and scripture as complex, multilayered scenarios whose full meaning might only be revealed when read or understood in relation to or comparison with other biblical scenarios (Dickson 254). Biblical typologies are hermeneutic tools used to access and recover meanings and should be thought of as a “method of decoding” or a “set of reading practices” (Dickson 254). The significance of the Biblical typology as a tool for unlocking a fuller or complete meaning cannot be underestimated in Chicaba’s hagiography, as well as the other Afro-women’s stories of this investigation. The Biblical typology functions for these Afro-women when they perceive a relationship between the African concept and the biblical story. For Yorùbá practitioners, links between Catholic and Afro-religious concepts is acceptable practice. This stands in contrast to Catholic absolutist practice, thus, the need to covertly embed Yorùbá cosmological references into their texts.

The biblical typology can be conceived of as a tactic for these Afro-women. By manipulating the convention of the typology, these women, and in this specific case Chicaba, could construct multilayered meanings to their lived experiences and interaction with Catholic discourse. Moreover, in the case of religious women who used the *imitatio christi* as a way of fusing themselves to Christ to make sense of their suffering, the use of the typology fits within the established practice for religious and mystic women in the early modern period. “The typological explications commonly available in the seventeenth century linked the history and drama of Christ’s life . . . with the salvation drama of each believer and with the whole span of sacred history” (Dickson 254). In the following discussion, I use biblical typologies to generate a reading in which Chicaba, through Paniagua, covertly describes the horrors of captivity and enslavement, and even more subtly, may describe a Yorùbá religious experience.

Chicaba’s initial mystical baptism can be read as a typological reference and possible rearticulation of a Biblical baptism of an African. In the book of Acts, the disciple Philip, who casts out unclean spirits and heals the sick and the lame, is commanded by God to journey south from Jerusalem when he encounters an authoritative Ethiopian eunuch in charge of the treasury of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. Phillip finds this eunuch reading a passage from Isaiah; he provides the Ethiopian with guidance and instruction, and, at his request, baptizes him, both of them submerging into the river and then re-emerging from the water. Promptly, Philip is swept away by the Holy Spirit, miraculously transported elsewhere. Upon Philip’s disappearance, the Ethiopian continues rejoicingly along his way (Acts 8, 26-39).

As an individual exposed to various Catholic sermons and texts, Chicaba would be hard-pressed not to see the similarities in these baptismal experiences: The wealthy African subject, Chicaba, the Guinean princess, and the eunuch, the Ethiopian treasurer; the mystical appearance and disappearance of the authoritative baptizing individual, the angel in Chicaba's confessor's rendition and Philip in the Biblical context, and the baptism itself at the crystalline fountain or in a "certain water" (Acts 8.

27). Additionally, the Ethiopian figure as discourse emerges from biblical text: "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God" (Psalms 68.31) and may suggest that "eighteenth-century missionary interpretation bequeathed to black believers the use of 'Ethiopia' as a symbol for all Africa and for black people everywhere" (Smith 65). We might also take this intertextual reading of Chicaba's baptism a step further. It is important to note that in the following discussion I do not suggest that Paniagua elaborates or embeds this meaning intentionally. I suggest, rather, that this baptismal description and its retelling is evidence of Chicaba's agency -- her intervention in her own historical trajectory.

In the following analysis, I suggest that Paniagua includes a description of Chicaba's mystical baptism in Africa in her hagiography because it is the description Chicaba told. Because Chicaba describes a mystical baptism experience that takes place prior to her baptism in Santo Tomé, we may read this inclusion of this original baptism as intentional. I argue that she purposely references the biblical baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. Thus, she manipulates Catholic rhetoric, deploying the seventeenth century practice of biblical typologies to insert her own reference to her suffering as a slave in the early modern system and her mystical union to Christ. Through her confessions and

descriptions of her mystical experiences, I suggest that Chicaba knowingly re-frames her baptism story in such a way as to describe her slave suffering as *imitatio christi*. The description skirts the edge of Catholic orthodoxy. Her story employs this biblical baptismal imagery, which references Isaiah -- the text the Eunuch was reading when Philip found him -- so as to elaborate a description of an enslaved African people. This manipulation of the Catholic discourse links Chicaba's suffering to Christ suffering.

In the biblical baptism of the Ethiopian, Philip encounters the eunuch reading a passage in Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53.7). This passage is traditionally interpreted as the foretelling of Christ's humiliation and death (Childs 38, 259). In the context of Chicaba's narration, we may read this phrase as an articulation of her *imitatio christi*. This description of Christ's suffering is Chicaba's suffering because she and Christ are linked as divine spouses. In chapter two, I elaborate a detailed description of *imitatio christi* as part of the repertoire of female sanctity and practice for mystic women in the early modern period. Biblical scholars affirm that Isaiah 53 can be read as an elaboration of the role of Christ as suffering servant and can be understood as a description of vicarious suffering (Spieckermann 1). Thus, as typology, Isaiah 53:7 contextualizes Chicaba's experience as vicarious suffering, the suffering of a slave and servant in her Spanish slave society. When read from this perspective, Chicaba's narration of her baptism points to a description of her captivity and enslavement. It provides a critique of her slavery experience and informs the reader that she is aware of her inability to speak directly as to

her oppression and affliction as a slave in the early modern period, like a dumb sheep to the slaughter.

There may be another justification for reading Chicaba's description of her baptism as an intertextual reference to the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. In the visual culture of seventeenth century Spain, popular prints of *The Baptism of the Ethiopian by Saint Philip* were in circulation and they worked to contradict the Renaissance concept of the immutability of the color of the African's skin (Fracchia 162). Art history scholars have offered deconstructed readings of these popular prints suggesting that the visual motifs conveyed in the prints communicate the whitening of the soul after baptism and the transformation of the African into a "white European neophyte" (Fracchia 162). Perhaps during her time in the viceregal household in Madrid, including her presentation to King Carlos II himself (Paniagua 57), Chicaba was exposed to an image of these prints of this miraculous African baptism. Reading this African baptism as a means of racial transformation may provide an alternate interpretation of Chicaba's subsequent vision of the white Mother and Child.

Chicaba's mystical vision of the white Mother and Child after her African baptism may be read in various ways. It may simply be an overt Catholic apparition of the Madonna and Child; it may be an image of a transformed Christian African Mother and Child or it may be a covert image of an African Orishá. In the following section, I offer a close reading of Chicaba's mystical baptism and subsequent vision of Mother and Child highlighting the ways in which it may be interpreted from a Yorùbá religious perspective.

It is significant that Chicaba's original story of baptism is vague and that Paniagua gives the minimal amount of details about Chicaba's experience. It is possible to read this first experience as an undercutting of Catholic ideology and a description of Yorùbá spiritual encounters. Immediately, following Chicaba's African baptism, Paniagua reinforces this vague description with a detailed Catholic experience, which clarifies Chicaba's uncertainty about the mystic experience (Paniagua 42). The following is Paniagua's detailed description of Chicaba's mystic encounter in Africa, in her meadow, far from her entourage, shortly after her African baptism at the crystal fountain.

aparecióse la pues, Niño tierno en los brazos de Maria Santísima. Atónita Teresa con la vista de objeto tan peregrino, se quedó embeleso, clavados los ojos en Señora y Niño, apacible éste cuanto hermoso, para excitarla a que tomase con más atención las señas de su persona. Tenía las manos pendiente una cinta tan resplandeciente como vistosa; con ella blandamente tocaba la cabeza de Teresa y al quererla ésta coger, retiraba el Niño su mano con gracia, de suerte que ella no podía alcanzarla. Repitió el Niño algunas veces la diligencia; Teresa el afán de poseerla, aunque nunca logró el tocarla y al cabo de un buen rato que duró este místico prodigios juego, poniendo Madre e Hijo sus benignos ojos en la niña, se huyeron a su vista, quedando Teresa, aunque de edad tan corta, combinando especies en su fantasía. La hermosura de la Señora, la gracia y dulzura del Hijo, lo blanco de sus rostros, siendo todos los que ella había visto tan atezados, fueron, a su entendimiento tan perspicaz como agudo, aunque en pueriles años, eficaces incentivos para su ansia y su deseo de acabar de conocer a este Dios encubierto y oculto (Paniagua 42, 43).

In this vision Paniagua presents the apparition of an image of a mother and child. They are both peaceful and beautiful. Chicaba becomes entranced by their appearance, so much so that her eyes lock on the image. Paniagua suggests that the purpose of this vision is to entice Chicaba so as to take better notice of the nature of God. Then he provides a more detailed description of her vision of the Mother and Child. In the image the Child dangles an embellished and resplendent ribbon from his hand touching Chicaba on her head. She tries to reach for it but he playfully pulls it out of her reach. Then the image of Mother and Child lock eyes on Chicaba and disappear. Chicaba is left to make sense of the various kinds of imagery in her mind: “. . . combinando especies en su fantasía” (43).

When read from a Yorùbá perspective, the meaning of the vision is deepened. The white faces of the Mother and Child are the focus of the image. While Paniagua describes the beauty of the Lady and the grace and sweetness of the Son -- Catholic rhetoric -- given the African context of the vision, in which their white faces are contrasted to the bronze color of the other inhabitants, the emphasis is on this sharp, clear, and inspired image as the strong motive or impetus for Chicaba’s desire to find out the true nature of this hidden God. Clearly, these words are Paniagua’s and clearly he refers to Chicaba’s desire to know the Catholic God, however, this use of the word “oculto” and the repetition of Chicaba as the only true source of these mystical experiences may hint at an alternate meaning.

One Yorùbá creation myth describes Yemoja, the goddess of fresh water, after quarrelling with her first husband Oranmiyan, fled carrying her baby on her back and her water pot on her head. To avoid capture, she set down her pot and then she transformed

into the river that flowed from that pot (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 46). Interestingly, Yemoja is also identified as the “Mother of fishes” or the “Mother of the children of fish” (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 46). The image of the fish is synonymous with Christ since the first century (Finaldi 16). One syncretic reading of Chicaba’s vision might be Yemoja as the Mother of Christ. Additionally, some Yorùbá peoples believe that divine creatures live under the water. “These creature are thought to be light in complexion and gorgeously attired in coral beads and costly garments” (Awowlalu 47). It is noteworthy that there are many deities of the Yorùbá faith that are described as white (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 39). Thus, the white faces perceived by Chicaba does not necessarily refer to the white faces of the European Madonna and Child. Furthermore, the fact that the child’s ribbon touches Chicaba on her head may have Yorùbá significance. The Yorùbá believe in reincarnation and in multiple souls, importantly, they revere the ancestral guardian soul. This soul is associated with a person’s head, her destiny and reincarnation (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 33). The concept of the inner head as the place the Orisha rides in a spirit possession trance is a Yorùbá religious practice that may also expand the interpretation of Chicaba’s baptism with this “angel” in African waters. In Chapter Five, I discuss this mounting practice of the Yorùbá. Perhaps Chicaba’s African mystical baptism was her coded description of her possession experience with Yemoja.

I suggest that Chicaba’s mystical vision of the Mother and the Child at the very least is syncretic. The retelling of this experience is ambiguous. Paniagua reinforces that only Chicaba knows what she saw and that she hid much about her experiences. The image of the white Mother and Child are overtly Catholic. However, the myth of Yemoja carrying her child and her pot of water who transforms into the river itself facilitates a

reading in which Chicaba's vision may be understood as her initiation as a medium in the Yorùbá belief system Ifa. This is a truly hidden story and only Chicaba knows what she saw.

It is possible to bring a different understanding to Chicaba's experiences, one that reveals her critique of her suffering as a slave and an insight into her Afro-Catholic syncretic ideology. Her hagiography is speckled with various descriptions of mystical encounters that may provide differentiated meanings when read from an Yorùbá perspective. For example, after her African baptismal experience, Paniagua relates how Chicaba mystically encounters the Spanish. In chapter six, Paniagua describes her capture and suffering in the slave ship.

Al pie de un árbol dejamos a Teresa, cuando a la orilla del mar surgió una nave española y entonces, de improviso, la asió de un brazo un joven gallardo, llevándola también todas sus joyuelas. Arrimóla a la orilla del mar y descubriéndola los de la nave, sin ver al que la conducía, porque éste se hizo invisible a sus ojos . . . Teresa con el ansia de verse alejar de sus tierra, con las lágrimas y fatiga que le ocasionaba verse entre gente extraña, estaba a los umbrales de la muerte, ya por la pena y congoja, ya por la sed que la ahogaba (Paniagua 50).

Overtly, this narration reveals an image of the hand of God grabbing Chicaba from the shore. This description appeals to the authority of Divine Providence but at the same time reveals the forced lived experience of Chicaba's capture. As highlighted in Chapter one of this dissertation, her suffering on the slave ship reads like those described in historical documents of the time that attest to the miserable conditions of the slave

ships (Conrad 15). The distress, the thirst, the thought of throwing oneself overboard to escape the horrific experience is couched in the narration of a girl chosen by God to experience suffering as a path to righteousness.

However, it may be possible that this invisible young “festive” man references an African Orishá, or it may be a symbolic stand-in for another enemy African captor who sold her to the Spanish slavers, as was the deeply entrenched practice of the internal African slave trade (Thornton 96). The fact that Chicaba was sitting under a tree at the beginning of this story may reference the reverence of the Orishá Iroko (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 52). Trees were understood as altars for practitioners of the Yorùbá divination belief system Ifa (Thompson 69). I elaborate a fuller description of this practice in chapter three when I discuss Úrsula’s image of the fig tree and chapter five when I discuss Rosa’s vision of the *gamelièra branca* -- the white tree. In this particular vision, Chicaba is sitting under the tree playing with her bracelets after having separated herself from her retinue, thus disobeying her parents. This scenario may be read from a Yorùbá perspective. In addition to Chicaba’s location at the base of the tree, an altar to Iroko, after disobeying her parents, she is caught -- grabbed by the arm of an young, festive, invisible man -- “joven gallardo . . . [que] . . . se hizo invisible a sus ojos” (50). Chicaba’s capture takes place in the physical space where the ocean meets land. Paniagua emphasizes the strangeness of the Spaniards and Chicaba’s longing to return to her homeland. This is a clear description of a physical as well as metaphorical crossroads: African land intersects the European Atlantic and Chicaba’s African past intersects her Catholic future. These images taken together, an image of a festive young

man, disobedience and crossroads, fosters a reading of a mystical encounter with the divine messenger Eshu.

Eshu was the youngest and cleverest of the deities. He is the divine trickster, serving other deities by causing trouble for humans who offend or neglect them (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 39). He lives at the crossroads and collects something from everyone, hence his wealthy position (39). He appears in the role of the divine enforcer (40). Perhaps the image Chicaba described to Paniagua may represent an understanding of Eshu bringing Chicaba into the arms of the Spanish rather than the invisible Hand of God.

Immediately after her capture, Paniagua describes another mystical apparition. Again this description may be read to reveal a description of her slave suffering and may encode a syncretic Afro-Catholic image. Chicaba is at the point of throwing herself overboard in the attempt to flee to her homeland, thinking the waves would simply carry her back to the shore. The same mystical Lady that Chicaba had seen after her African baptism appears and comforts her. Overtly, Paniagua emphasizes the Catholic identity of the Lady as the Holy Mother; however, Chicaba may be hiding a different or syncretic visage of this female deity in her description given the spatial location on the Atlantic Ocean. The scenario communicates a struggle of wills. The description may be read overtly as Chicaba's conversion, or rather, sanctification, in that it is in this moment she decides to submit her will -- her desire to return to Africa -- to the will of God, her relocation to Catholic Spain. It may also be a covert reference to the Orishá Yemoja.

Afligíala el no saber nadar, pues en esta habilidad y destreza, aunque tan niña, la parecía podía libertarse de esclavitud tan penosa y viéndose negada a este consuelo, hizo, según después aseguró ella propia, este pueril discurso: la nave cuanto más se aleja, va más contra corriente, con que saltando yo en el agua, corriendo como corre hacia mi tierra, sus mismos raudales me han de llevar a ella. Como lo pensó, lo quiso poner por obra, pero al tiempo de ejecutarlo, se la apareció una Señora que en sus majestad y grandeza, descubría bien claro era la misma que vio en la fuente dichosa allá en su patria. Enjugó con apacible mansedumbre sus lágrimas, aquietó sus ansias con sus caricias, dejándola libre de todo punto del cariño que a su patria abrigaba en su pecho y la llevaba al más lamentable naufragio (Paniagua 51).

This description of the mystical apparition of the Holy Mother justifies the Catholic role in Chicaba's salvation. This image emphasizes the powerful role of this majestic lady to pacify Chicaba's anguish and suffering. It depicts an inversion of the real situation. Chicaba is enslaved by the Spanish Catholics but this image suggest the Catholic Holy Mother liberates Chicaba from her ties to her African homeland. This Catholic image supposedly supplants Chicaba's parents' love and affection: "dejando libre de todo punto del cariño que a su patria abrigaba en su pecho".

Yet, if we consider this description from the Yorùbá perspective we again encounter Chicaba with the Orishá Yemoja: "Yemoja é a divindade das águas doces e salgadas . . . Era uma mulher que tinha o hábito de sentar-se no lugar onde, atualmente, existe a ponte . . . preside julgamentos pela água" (Verger 293, 294). Yemoja is associated with the colors blue and white (Verger 294) and thus, may have easily been

syncretized in Chicaba's "fantasy" with the images of the Holy Mother she encountered upon her arrival in Spain. Moreover, part of the origin myth of the waters, after moving to the "evening-in-the-west," the ancient Yorùbá name for the West," (Thompson 272) Yemoja runs away from her spouse after a quarrel (Thompson 272). Upon falling down, she transforms into the river and the source of the ocean (Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* 46).

In the description offered by Paniagua, Chicaba contemplates running away from the Spanish on the tops of the waves of the ocean because she cannot swim. This image mimics the image of Yemoja fleeing her spouse. Additionally, we know that Chicaba was captured West of her homeland in the ocean, or perhaps even at a slave trading post on a riverbank (Thornton 194). It is most probable to believe that in the traumatic moment of her capture she may have been comforted by the image, or at the very least the story of Yemoja. To make sense of this trauma later she re-remembered the image combined with the Catholic images of the Holy Mother. Perhaps, this description of the Mother Mary is a way to hide Chicaba's vision of Yemoja. At the very least, the possibility of a syncretic vision stands out.

Through Paniagua's carefully constructed narrative, Chicaba's hagiography relates the possession of her body and the trauma of her slave experience. It details moments in her life that give witness to this possession describing them in terms of mystical visions and apparitions. These moments overtly testify to Divine Providence's role in the capture of her body and the possession of her soul but covertly they relate possible Yorùbá Orishá encounters. Chicaba's hagiography is Paniagua's interpretation of how Chicaba made sense of her trauma and constructed meaning in her life. Paniagua

says little about Chicaba's worldview in comparison to what she does not say, or rather, what she hides about how she interprets and processes her life experiences.

However, one form of her personal expression is her poetry. Paniagua records some of the phrases she composed, which overtly detail her relationship to Christ, her divine spouse. While these phrases clearly fit within the trope of the female visionary mystic and access the repertoire of female sanctity, they may offer another meaning. In the following section, first I analyze Chicaba's poetry and situate it within its Catholic context, and then I discuss a possible re-framing of Chicaba's poetry. I suggest it may be read as Yorùbá practice and performance of the oral narrative genre known as bride lamentation, *ekun iyowa*, or alternatively *rara iyowa*, herein referred to as *ekun (rara) iyowa*. These performances are part of a larger compendium of Yorùbá personal praise poetry known as *oriki*.

Chicaba's Poetry: an Afro-Catholic Interpretation of Imitatio Christi and Oriki

Chicaba's hagiography includes portions of her poetry that depict, through the imagery of jealousy and erotic language, an inversion of the power relationship between Chicaba and her divine spouse, Christ. Chicaba's poetry illustrates her possession of Christ, her bridegroom. Paniagua frames the jealousy Chicaba experiences by suggesting that *su Majestad*, Christ, was jealous when Chicaba invited some visiting religious men to see her cell (Houchins and Fra-Molinero 237). In chapter 29, Paniagua records Chicaba's words to describe her response to the scenario:

Yo sin reparo de hazerlo por mal, los traxe, a que vieran la Celda, y no crea V.R. que es mentira, se enojó tanto su Majestad, y una reprehension llevé del Señor, que me hizo llorar; y estaba tan corrida interiormente, que para comulgar, llegaba

con una vergüenza tan grande, que toda me cubría de sudor: y cierto no lo hice con mala intención, ni por disgustar a su Majestad; ni en todos aquellos días sabía, qué hazerme; a la Virgen Santissima supliqué, hiziesse las amistades, y la conté la falta en que yo había caído sin reparo, y parece, que mi corazón sentía algún consuelo (Paniagua 95).

Drawing on this experience, Chicaba, ignited by the jealousy demonstrated by her husband Christ, mirrors his jealousy, composing poetry to give voice to her equal, if not surpassing, love for Him. As Paniagua suggests, “. . . jealousy made her exclaim spontaneously the following verses” (Houchins and Fra Molinero 237).

Ay, Jesús de mi alma/dónde te has ido/que pare no vienes/y te has perdido/Ay,
Jesús ¿qué diré yo?/si os vais con otras/¿que haré yo?/Clamaré, lloraré/hasta ver a
Dios/y si no, y si no/morir de amor/Y ya lo dio/pues estoy tan sola/que no has
venido/Y si estás con otra/yo lo he visto/a Maria y Marta/las has querido
(Houchins and Fra Molinero 237).

Chicaba composes her poetry out of her love for Christ. She questions his absence, she questions what she can say, she wonders what she will do if He pays attention to other women, and she affirms that her jealousy is founded because she has seen it before, employing the example of Jesus’s divided time spent with Martha and Mary. Chicaba’s desire to fuse with the physical body of Christ her specific *imitatio christi* is motivated by her love for her Divine Spouse and exemplified in her expression that she will die without Him. In describing her lover, Christ, her language has a very sensual and erotic tone:

. . . De manera que es dolor grande cuando tengo el corazón sereno y quieto. Es ardor cuando el afecto sube con exceso a desear el cumplir con las obligaciones que debo; y no digo bien, que no es exceso lo que es razón. Me abraso, me quemó, diera voces, pero las doy dentro de mí (Houchins and Fra Molinero 238).

Women religious mystic writers' descriptions of their passion for Christ were erotic and the sensual: "[T]he religious experience of medieval and early modern women mystics is often regarded as intrinsically erotic" (Miller 25). While Chicaba's use of an erotic tone to convey her passion for Christ is similar to other female mystics and her desire to fuse with his physical body is part of the trope of the female visionary mystic and the repertoire of female sanctity, her use of jealous language is unique because it narrates her desire to possess Christ, mirroring his jealousy -- he was angry about the two clerics in her cell, thus, she was despondent about his divided time and shared love with two other women, Mary and Martha.

One might read this desire to possess Christ as an inversion of her slave experience. She became a possession of the Spanish empire as a slave body. To rectify this trauma, she inverts the language of love, specifically the erotic mystical rhetoric, to illustrate her desire to possess Christ's love. She uses her position as a Bride of Christ to exert control over the relationship with Christ: maybe to compensate for the way in which Christ's divine hand snatched her from the beach as a child and stole her away from her land, she desires to possess Him. More important than the details of her coming to Christ, her poetry gives shape and form to her story highlighting the unique ways in which Chicaba constructed meaning in her Catholic setting.

This Catholic reading of Chicaba's poetry as an attempt to possess Christ and her feelings as the Bride of Christ may also have a Yorùbá significance. Chicaba's poetry read as a mirroring of Christ's jealousy suggests an egalitarian worldview: "All facets of the [Yorùbá] people's cosmic experiences manifest the principle of gender complementarity" (Olajubu 23). Yorùbá cosmology -- the origin of social and ritual categories -- as well as their cosmogony -- the origin of the world -- are communicated and understood through their myths. "Myths legitimate social institutions and practices by their references to ancient precedences . . . Myths are sacred stories that offer meaning and explanation for incidents history could not account for" (26). In a way, Yorùbá myths may be understood to function like Biblical typologies. They take precedents from the past to instruct and construct meaning in the present. Myths in Yorùbá culture are composed of stories that illustrate the necessity of balanced power relations between men and women, husbands and wives. The role of wife is the center of a woman's power in the Yorùbá culture and a marriage is understood as a union between families rather than a union between individuals. While marriage is celebrated and considered a happy time it is also a time of lamentation because the bride moves from her mother's family to live with her husband's family (31). The marriage ceremony is a performance space for religious and cultural ritual for the Yorùbá peoples. Yorùbá women from a young age are inculcated and trained in the practice and performance of recitation and knowledge about the genres of oral literatures performed during such rites as marriage ceremonies (24). Moreover, "oral literature constitutes the storehouse of Yorùbá religion and philosophy, which informs peoples' responses to life experiences, individually and collectively" (34).

The marriage is consecrated through ritual in which the bride lamentation, *ekun (rara) iyowa*, is performed. The term “ekun”, which means crying, is used literally and metaphorically within this genre. The bride lamentation is recited and includes recognition of the family’s lineage, maternal and paternal, transmitted via chants known as *oriki orile* (Barber 98). Bride lamentations include signs of trepidation about the bride’s change in status and becoming part of a new household (Olajubu 96). These recitations are unique to each circumstance and relate the complexities of the social organizations and relationships of the particular individuals as well as the complexities of ancestor lineage. Importantly, elements of theatre and performance are embedded in the genres of oral literature, such as the *ekun (rara) iyowa* and the *oriki* (35).

The performance of oral literature is an integral aspect of religious sessions in various cults. The god(dess) is praised through the recitation of some genres of oral literature to set the stage for a proper consultation between the deity and its human supplicant. The spoken word thus becomes an embodiment of the god(dess), creating a multidimensional level of mystical communication (35). These chants function to give form, structure, and content to Yorùbá mythology and provide a line of access to communicate with God. While, the performance of oral literature transcends gender boundary lines, generally, Yorùbá women are viewed as custodians of Yorùbá oral literature, “Women . . . constitute the repositories of the people’s essence, history and identity” (36). Tapping into this well of knowledge, the performance of Yorùbá oral literature, may be seen as similar to the ways religious women drew from the repertoire of female sanctity to construct meaning in their lives in the early modern setting.

Yorùbá women are trained to chant the *oriki* using stock phrases and basic components of structure. “Each chant concentrates on the *oriki* appropriate to the context for which it is being performed” (Barber 80). Bride lamentations, *ekun (rara) iyowa*, a kind of *oriki*, function to construct meaning for Yorùbá women beginning at a very young age. Girls begin to role-play in public performances of all kinds employing songs and chants while accompanying their mothers and sisters to various kinds of societal festivities and ceremonies. At nine and ten years of age, girls could produce short and standardized versions of their lineage, *oriki orile*, with verses of gratitude, lamentation and self-contemplation (98). During the marriage ceremony women would sing and chant these phrases in chorus and publicly, however, after marriage the women would recite these poems privately (99). Women would continue the practice of chanting, in the forms of personal *oriki* of the ancestors. “Oriki is the central channel of communication between devotee and god” (99).

Performing the *oriki* requires training and practice. It takes on multiple forms and these chants become ways of expressing not only the ideology of the community but the individual sentiments of the devotee. Many of these chants, relate the realities and complexities of daily life and the complications of various social negotiations. The personal *oriki*, and the *ekun (rara) iyowa*, the bride lamentation, describe the various conflicts and consequences a bride might encounter in transitioning into a new family, “hostile in-laws, jealous co-wives, petty meanness and unfairness of all kinds” (112).

Each Yorùbá bride has the opportunity to differentiate her *oriki*, creating a unique meaning for her unique experience but situated within the broader context of the Yorùbá culture. On her wedding day, the bride becomes the sole object of attention and has an

audience of undivided attention, thus, this ceremony conveys the dualistic position of the bride. While she is actor of her own expression and feelings, she also becomes the object of display (113). This tension is,

imprinted on the form and content of the *rara iyowa*, and is the fundamental source of this genre's unusual features. Everything the bride says is intended to direct the attention back to herself. The genre, in fact, is a long reflection on, the dramatisation of the bride's change in status. It asks the audience to look at her, observe her glory, recognise the transition she is undertaking (113).

Thus, the individual Yorùbá bride, and later as a married mature Yorùbá wife, she has access to the repertoire of these chants and their variations. Yorùbá women understand that their culture, myths and philosophies, are expressed through these personal *oriki*. In employing, or chanting, these *oriki*, the actor demands the attention and the space and expresses the tensions of the change in her status or the difficulties of her everyday life after transitioning from her mother's home, to her husband's house.

We may assume that Chicaba, as a young Yorùbá girl of ten, would have already been well inculcated and trained in this oral tradition. Perhaps she had participated in many of these ceremonies and watched as other women of her community performed their own *ekun (rara) iyowa*. We cannot underestimate the similarities between Catholic women's conception of Christ as the their divine spouse and Catholic practice of devotion through song and prayer and the way in which Yorùbá women function as the medium for communication with God through oral literature and chants like the *oriki* and the *ekun (rara) iyowa*. In considering Chicaba's poetry from this Yorùbá perspective, we may come to understand more about her use of jealousy to convey the tension she felt

in her love for her divine husband. Chicaba's poetry appropriates and redirects Christ's jealousy: Christ's anger about the two clerics admitted to Chicaba's cell is reframed when Chicaba's expresses her jealousy about his relationship with his co-wives, Mary and Martha. Through this re-framing, Chicaba becomes the focus of attention; her suffering becomes the object of display. Moreover, it functions to create balance between her emotions and her husband's. This is an aspect of Yorùbá philosophy. Her poetry may be read as an erotic Catholic expression of love as the Bride of Christ or it may be read as an egalitarian Yorùbá expression of jealousy as the Wife of Christ. Yet, her poetry may also be read as less personal in a sense and more of an expression of her transition from her mother's home, West Africa Yorùbáland, to her husband's house, Catholic Spain.

Chicaba's overtly Catholic poetry may hide multiple meanings when read indirectly from a Yorùbá perspective. Her mystical experiences may be read as references to her Yorùbá cosmology and her poetry may be read as re-articulations of Yorùbá praise poetry or bride lamentations. In this section, I have suggested that her poetry may be understood to transmit her emotions about the tensions of her lived experiences, her suffering as a slave, from a Yorùbá vantage point. Specifically, she deploys the genre of the *okiri* and the *ekun (rama) iyowa* to convey her feelings about her marriage to her Divine husband and the transition to his household.

Conclusion: Recapturing Chicaba's Transformation Story

Sister Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo died a revered and popular mystic healer in religious community of Salamanca, Spain in 1748. She was born a West African girl, acculturated and inculcated into her indigenous Yorùbá belief system, known as Ifa. Her

captivity, enslavement and suffering service in Spain are framed and told by the Catholic church so as to harness her fame as a healing prophetic mystic. However, I suggest that her mystic fame may have had other origins than Catholic worship and Divine Christian intervention. Paniagua tells her story in congruence with the hagiographic tradition but admits there are many more aspects to Chicaba's story that he does not communicate because, Chicaba, as the sole source of the true history, hides much more detail than he could possibly include in his narration of her experience. I offer that Chicaba hides a Yorùbá understanding of her Catholic experience. The result is a unique Afro-Catholic practice in the early modern period. She relies on her Yorùbá cosmology and practice to make sense of her surrounding and to cope with the trauma of her forced removal.

Her words, her poetry, her *oriki*, become the embodiment of her suffering, a mode of communication between her two worlds, her motherland, West Africa Yorùbáland, and her *husbandland*, Spain and between divinities, Yemoja and Christ. Her visions may reference and rearticulate the myths of her motherland's past. Her visions of the Mother and Child may be rearticulations of the water goddess Yemoja. Her capture may have been part of Eshu's trick as recompense for her disobedience. Her life and service in the Marquesa of Mancera's household indoctrinated her into the early modern Catholic baroque religious system. She observed the similarities between women's religious worship in the Catholic realm and the role of women in her autochthonous Yorùbá community.

Chicaba's worship, her communication with God, became her unique practice -- part Catholic and part African. Although Paniagua's framing relates the Catholic side of her story, he interestingly leaves enough space for conjecture. By highlighting Chicaba's

act of hiding the details, he invites the reader to look for and find the silenced renditions of Chicaba's mystical experiences. His framing establishes her authority and then permits the reader to discern for herself the extent to which Chicaba expresses her emotions and the details about her captivity, enslavement and assimilation to baroque Catholic Spanish society in the early modern period. Paniagua's narration may have excluded many details that would link Chicaba to a more African practice in her own time. For early modern readers, Chicaba became Teresa the paragon of Catholic piety and the perfect example of the success of the evangelical mission and a concrete justification for the enterprise of transatlantic slavery in the early modern world. Yet, as Paniagua repeatedly points out, Chicaba was the only remaining witness to her story and this authority is based on her racial difference.

Thus, for modern readers, the act of reading this hagiography becomes an attempt to recapture Chicaba's story. The value of African religious practice was not assessed or perceived in a non-objective manner in the early modern period. It was described and observed with the expressed goals of conversion and linked to the imperial project of soul saving. Chicaba's true story had no audience in her time. However, today, her true story becomes the transformation from the exemplar Catholic Teresa to Chicaba to the Yorùbá Orishá devotee and Ifa practitioner. Chicaba embedded sufficient details about her story and employed tactics like the seventeenth century reading practice of decoding understood as biblical typology, which, at its core, functioned in a similar way to Yorùbá oral narrative literature to express her unique Afro-Catholic self, constructing and negotiating meaning in her new world. Reading her hagiography in this way, filtered

through the Yorùbá lens, it may be possible to see that Chicaba hid much more about her story than Paniagua ever really knew.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE WHITE TREE, THE SACRED HEARTS AND THE
HEAVENLY HOSTESS -- Covert Afro-Catholic Agency in the Mystical Visions of
Rosa Maria Egipcíaca

On June 4, 1765, Rosa Maria Egipcíaca (c.1719--1771), a woman of African origin, ex-prostitute, religious *beata*, freed Brazilian slave, popular saint and perhaps Brazil's first known female author of a manuscript on theological discourse, stood before the Portuguese Tribunal in Lisbon and gave her last recorded testimony. Rosa was no novice in defending herself from Catholic inquisitors. She had been detained, interrogated and publicly beaten in Minas Gerais, Brazil in 1750; and she had been denounced, detained, and interrogated again in Rio de Janeiro by the Ecclesiastical Judge in 1762. Moreover, she had endured five sessions in front of the Inquisitors of the Holy Office in Lisbon, which had spanned a period of two years. During this last session, the inquisitor Jeronimo Rogado Carvalho e Silva asked Rosa "se [é] lembrada de mais alguma coisa, que haja de declarar a respeito do progresso da sua vida" (ANTT, Pro. 9065, fl. 36r). In response, Rosa recounted her memories of mystical visions and supernatural voices and emphasized her role as the servant of the Divine. Overtly, her descriptions reframed Catholic rhetoric and conformed to the repertoire of female sanctity. However, I suggest that Rosa's words foster at least two readings of her religious practice. On one level, her memories of her mystical experiences employ Afro-religious imagery and on another level, her active re-framing of these memories, which employs the trope of the female visionary mystic, covertly communicates a critique of religious hypocrisy within her Catholic society.

In this chapter, I examine Rosa's memories as she presents them in her Inquisition testimony. Rosa's testimonies serve as my principal source. They offer Rosa's own descriptions of her encounters with the supernatural, the visions she saw and the voices she heard. Specifically, this chapter produces a close reading of two of her mystic experiences. In her initial deposition given in Rio de Janeiro in 1762, Rosa describes her memory of her vision of a large white tree in which the Sacred Hearts of the Holy Family appear to her. As I analyze below, this image may incorporate Afro-religious imagery and convey a critique of Catholic hypocrisy. Additionally, in Rosa's final Inquisition session in Lisbon in 1765, she describes her memory of hearing the voice of the Archangel Michael depicting her as a heavenly banquet hostess. In this recounting, she reframes the practices associated with the repertoire of female sanctity by intercalating herself with the imagery of female flesh and food. This invocation of food imagery may signify how Rosa understood her religious role. As I discuss below, traditionally, the religious female body was equated with nourishment. The concept of spiritual nourishment is conflated with Christ's flesh and embodied in the Holy Communion wafer. Rosa's description of her vision in which she is classified as a celestial banquet hostess by the voice of the Archangel Michael signals Rosa's inclusion within this tradition and highlights her own perception of her role as popular saint and mystic in her own time. These mystical experiences exemplify Rosa's re-working of Catholic rhetoric and her reframing of the role of the Catholic visionary mystic, which permitted Rosa to perform the role of Afro-Catholic popular saint in her early modern baroque Brazilian community.

This analysis and close reading uncovers Rosa's subtle, and at times, not so subtle, religious critique. Rosa's life began near the West African coast, unfolded in colonial Brazil, and ended in the Secret Cells of the Holy Office of the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon. Her trajectory was influenced by many factors outside of her control, but, as I argue, Rosa plotted her own actions and decisions. I suggest that Rosa used the Catholic religious space to rework baroque religious imagery, reframe the trope of the female visionary mystic and reinvent the repertoire of female sanctity so as to transform her status from slave to mystic in the hearts and minds of those around her.

Rosa's Afro-Catholic Agency

This chapter examines Rosa's mystical experiences of the vision of the white tree and the Sacred Hearts and the voice of the Archangel Michael describing her a heavenly hostess in detail because they are representative of Rosa's social agency: They illustrate the ways in which Rosa actively chose to intervene in her own historical trajectory by reframing the trope of the female visionary mystic and reinventing the repertoire of female sanctity. However, many of Rosa's visions functioned in a similar way. For example, Rosa used the visionary space and the image of a dove to demand access to education, as I detail below. Consequently, she learned to read and to write, drafting a manuscript, *A sagrada teologia do amor de deus lus brilhante das almas peregrinas* (ANTT, Pro. 9065, Fl. 16v). Unfortunately, the majority of this manuscript seems to have been burned. Two pages remain and are archived with Rosa's Inquisition testimony in the National Archive of *Torre do Tombo* in Lisbon, Portugal. Included in this archive are other documents that attest to Rosa's lived experiences, such as many letters dictated and written by Rosa herself. Letters to her previous owners and to her spiritual confessor

offer insight into Rosa's life, her visions and her active identity transformation from slave to mystic. Beginning in 1750, Rosa would close her letters sent to her previous owners referring to herself as their humble slave, yet by 1758, she would close her letters referring to herself as their spiritual mother. Archived alongside these letters are the transcriptions of her deposition with the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio de Janeiro, the source for her vision of white tree and the Sacred Hearts, and the testimonies of those who witnessed Rosa's behavior and had public knowledge of her religious practice.

A close reading of Rosa's texts -- her letters, her testimonies, and the supporting documentation -- fosters an interpretation of her religious practice as syncretic, or melded. Her words actively construct her own hybrid identity as an Afro-Catholic woman in the New World. Rosa's testimonies reveal religious imagery that fuses baroque, Catholic religious worship with Afro-religious cosmology: she incorporates Brazilian-Yorùbá imagery and Afro-religious possession practice into her overtly Catholic worship. I argue that Rosa's testimony uncovers her Afro-Catholic voice and reveals her hybrid identity. Moreover, these descriptions of her mystical memories illustrate the complex process of ethnogenesis, new identity construction that Rosa underwent during her life in Colonial Brazil.

I read Rosa's descriptions of her mystical experiences as evidence of syncretic Afro-Catholic religious practice and her critique of Catholic hypocrisy. I recognize that this proposed African, or better, Afro-Catholic, reading of Rosa's visions, is "impossible to determine absolutely" (Merrim 199). I realize that my reading, which attempts to uncover Rosa's hybrid, Afro-Catholic voice, floats this investigation upon tumultuous waters in the sea of literary scholarship. However, I am attempting, in a way similar to

that of Stephanie Merrim in her discussion of Sor Juana's use of the Mexican Archive in her reading of the *Divino Narciso*, to find the indirect, intertextual references in the work, which offer another textual meaning. This meaning, by its very nature, cannot be singular. Rosa's texts, like true baroque texts, are inherently multiplicitous. More importantly, they are indirect and rarely explicit. Thus, my reading of Rosa's overtly Catholic testimony seeks to reframe her words. I look for the indirect meanings and the hidden histories. I read for the insurgence of the Afro-voice, blended with the Catholic voice, because that is the community to which Rosa belonged, a blended New World, Ibero-Atlantic space.

In this chapter, first, I provide a brief biographical sketch of Rosa's life. Then, I situate her lived experiences in relationship to the Portuguese Inquisition and how it functioned in Colonial Brazil. Next, I offer a close reading of her vision of the white tree and the Sacred Hearts of the Holy Family. I read Rosa's local fame and popular religious status through the concepts of Surrogation and transformation performance. Then, I offer a second primary-text analysis in which Rosa testifies to hearing the voice of the Archangel Michael. I suggest that this vision may be read as a culmination of Rosa's paradigm and it demonstrates her ability to actively manipulate Catholic discourse to reframe her role as a mystic and highlight her own religious practice as superior to that of her Inquisitors. Specifically, I suggest that Rosa's agency is clear from this reading in which she performs an image of a redeeming flesh -- a female version of the Host, the nourishing Banquet Attendant and surrogate for the body of Christ.

It is part of my larger argument that Rosa reworked Christian theology and conflated it with African cosmology to reinvent her own Afro-Catholic religious

mysticism and revelatory practices. I contend that Rosa transcended the New World female slave condition and constructed her own discourse through her visions. In the imaginaries of her followers, she represented a form of “Surrogate Host”. She linked her survival experiences, specifically those memories of deprivation during the Middle Passage, and her experiences of persecution, to Christ’s experiences. Through her re-telling of this trauma, she fused her suffering to the redemptive suffering of Christ -- her unique form of *imitatio christi*, which I have outlined in chapter two. Thus, this connection functioned to create meaning for daily survival, for Rosa and her followers, much in the tradition of her African origins.

Rosa: A Brief Biography

Rosa Maria Egipcíaca was a *beata*, a lay, pious woman, who became a popular saint and the first female writer in Brazil. Rosa was transported from the port of Whydah (present-day Benin), Africa to Rio de Janeiro in 1725 when she was six years old. Upon her arrival, she was sold and officially baptized. She lived in the Freguesia de Candelária in Rio de Janeiro until she was fourteen. She testified that was “deflowered” by her abusive owner and then sold to Dona Ana Garçês de Morais of the Freguesia de Inficionado, Minas Gerais (ANTT, Proc. 9065). In Minas, she was exploited as a prostitute to generate income for her owner and herself. As part of her slave status in Brazil, she had to secure her own sustenance, shelter and survival.

Rosa testified that, in 1748, she began to experience pain and various sensations that she attributed to possession experiences. According to Rosa and other witnesses, who testified both for and against her during her deposition hearings in Rio in 1762, one such possession experience prompted her outburst during the sermon at the Igreja do Pilar in

1749 (Mott 96). She caused such a scene that, after the mass, she was taken into custody and placed in the public jail for eight days. This was her first encounter with those connected to the Office of the Inquisition. Ultimately, religious clergy colluded with civil authorities and Rosa was publicly beaten, which left her right side paralyzed. Rosa spent time under the protection of Coronel João Gonçalves Fraga, an influential and wealthy individual connected to the social network of the emerging merchant class of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, during her convalescence. Additionally, Rosa had forged alliances with Pedro Rodrigues Arvelos, her emancipator and the nephew of her spiritual confessor and exorcist, Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes. In 1751, Rosa moved to Rio de Janeiro with her exorcist so as to avoid further confrontations with the local authorities. Although Rosa had amassed a local following in the area surrounding of Mariana in Minas Gerais and had fomented connections to power individuals, she had also created a public scandal. To avoid fanning the flames of this scandal, Rosa repositioned herself alongside new allies in Rio, such as Frei Agostinho de São Jose.

Rosa used these new alliances in Rio as well as her relationships to influential individuals in Minas Gerais to build her fame in her community of São Sebastião, in Rio de Janeiro. Rosa's visions worked as a tool to solicit donations from wealthy benefactors. For example, on one occasion Rosa recounted that while writing out the Ave Maria, she felt rigidity in her arm and a force directed her face towards the image of Our Lady of Piety (Mott 256). From this image emanated voices commanding her to write a letter to a certain priest requesting donations to buy a house for herself and other women sinners like her. It was this letter that secured the funds for the construction of the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto. In contrast to a convent, which typically

was established to "protect sacred women from the contamination of the world" (Van Deusen 126) a *recolhimento* was a "lay pious house for spiritual expression and an asylum for secular women" (126). The Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto was a shelter where all kinds of women were housed: single, widowed, sometimes married, Portuguese and *criolla*, African and Afro-descendant. Women of different *castas* and different social classes, including repentant lascivious and wayward women of the city lived together (Mott 255).

Rosa moved into this lay pious house where she was regarded as the regent. She exercised great judgment and authority over the women of various classes and *castas* within this space (Mott 255). She secured this power through her claims of mystical visions. The belief in Rosa as a visionary mystic allowed her to manipulate individuals around her and facilitated her access to shelter, education, influence and fame. By 1753, she had become quite literate, crafting letters with her own pen and composing her own manuscript with the approval and support of her spiritual confessor, Frei Agostinho de São Jose. It is possible to read how Rosa's continual movement prompted a need for her to ensconce a permanent home for herself, a space where she could be assured of both her physical survival and practicing her vocation: she was uprooted off the coast of Whydah, Africa, transported to the New World; she lived with various masters in Rio and Minas, before, finally, coming to live within the Recolhimento under the guidance of her spiritual confessor.

Rosa's familiarity with influential members of Rio de Janeiro's social network provided limited protection. Rosa's spiritual possessions created such notorious and public scandal that her perceived flouting of orthodox religious practice caught the

attention of Dom Antonio do Desterro, the bishop of the diocese in Rio, and friend of the Marquis do Pombal in Portugal (Mott 385). Rosa's allegedly unorthodox behavior was brought to the attention of the Portuguese Inquisition and, consequently, she was denounced and imprisoned in Rio de Janeiro in February of 1762. Subsequently, Rosa was accused of heresy and false sainthood and prosecuted by the Holy Office of the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon, Portugal, in October of 1763. Ultimately, Rosa's case was never closed and a sentence was never dispensed. However, she remained locked in the secret cells of the Inquisition until her body was discovered dead on the floor of the kitchen in 1771 (ANTT, Proc. 18078).

Not Even Rosa Expects the Portuguese Inquisition

Rosa was no novice in dealing with administrators of Ecclesiastical jurisdiction. She had managed to withstand persecution and punishment in Mariana, Minas Gerais and from 1751 to 1762 her life in Rio had been fraught with different forms of ecclesiastical intervention. Nobody, including Rosa, could have expected her encounter with the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon in 1763. Importantly, Rosa's story unfolds and coincides with a shift in emphasis and function of Inquisitorial power in Brazil. Rosa's testimony exemplifies how the Portuguese Inquisition functioned as a sanctioning tool to maintain social order in mid-eighteenth century in Brazil. The Inquisition process and, by extension, the presence of the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio de Janeiro, did not solely function to solidify religious power per se, but also to shore up the power of the Crown (Kiddy 68). The Crown under the *Padroado* controlled the Holy Office of the Inquisition and the Catholic Church, ancient concessions from the pope (Savelle 159). Pombaline Enlightenment reform began its process to limit the Church's

power, specifically, targeting Jesuits and eventually curtailing the Inquisition's power to sentence individuals during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The ecclesiastical authority worked as an agent of the Crown to solidify its absolute power and stamp out superstitious practice in Colonial Brazil. Rosa's experiences converge with the time in which the Crown began to extricate itself from its conjoined powers with the Catholic Church (Muniz 39). On the coattails of Pombaline reform, secular officials began to lay the groundwork for their eventual conflict with the Church and usurp its stronghold with regard to social influence (Maxwell 173). Interestingly enough, Dom Antonio do Desterro, the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio, was a friend of the Marquis de Pombal (Mott 323). The Crown used ecclesiastical representatives and, specifically, the hands of the Portuguese Inquisition to untie the knots between these two would-be juggernauts of institutional social organization (Wadsworth 144). The Portuguese Inquisition was not a monolithic religious notion. There was never an official seat of the Holy Office in Brazil (Chesnut 21). The bishops that represented the intentions of the Holy Office in Brazil were agents of a vast social network. This social network functioned as a tool of the monarchy, one that served as the judicial and executive arm of Portuguese authority in Portuguese-American society (Souza 181). This imbrication of religious and secular jurisdiction aids in the understanding of the overlapping social space that offered slaves and freed-slaves, like Rosa, the highest degrees of autonomy in Brazil.

Rosa's encounter with the Portuguese Inquisition illustrates the degree to which the Crown perceived her practices as superstitious. By charging her with false-sainthood and heresy, the inquisitors recognized her behaviors and her relative autonomy as detrimental to both the Crown's and the Church's authority and their larger project of

homogeneity and social stability. Thus, her trial and transcripts signal her heterodox religious practice as public scandal within her society. Rosa's practices were deemed scandalous by some community members and later by Inquisitorial prosecutors, yet these same practices fostered her local fame and contributed to the construction of her Afro-Catholic identity as a popular mystic, which facilitated the construction of the *Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto*. I suggest that Rosa's rearticulation of the role of visionary mystic permitted her to infuse her Catholic religious practices with Afro-religious imagery and references. Rosa's testimony reveals how, through meticulous manipulation of the Catholic religious space, she was able to forge alliances with influential members of her society, those involved with the Church and members of the emerging merchant class related to lay religious individuals living in Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. These relationships allowed Rosa to reach an elevated social standing. She had great autonomy and movement outside of the religious space, which aided in her transformation from the ascribed social status of slave to the achieved status of a popular saint and mystic. This fame secured her a space in the historical record and, ultimately, it resulted in her incarceration and death within the secret cells of the Holy Office of the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon.

Rosa's Afro-Catholic Identity and the Brazilian Baroque Imaginary

A reading of Rosa's testimony uncovers a voice that articulates the construction and the negotiation of a new hybrid identity. In part, Rosa's Afro-Catholic identity developed in response to social tensions in Brazil during the baroque period and, specifically, tensions within the Catholic Church in mid-eighteenth century Minas Gerais. The baroque movement in Brazil encompassed constant tensions between

shifting perspectives of theological ideologies about *castas*, slave systems and their practical applications. For example, the churches of Minas Gerais as physical, religious and artistic structures, worked as concrete reinforcements of Catholic ideals that were underscored by the Portuguese social and religious hierarchy during the Counter-Reformation in Brazil (Tribe 67). This baroque aesthetic was more than an artistic motif. Encapsulated within this imagery were cultural messages that mirrored evolving religious and, increasingly, multi-ethnic discourses.

Architecture typical of churches in colonial Minas Gerais displayed “iconography [that] point[ed] to African conceptions of religion in which there [was] no clear distinction between the profane and the sacred” (Tribe 75). Within African and Afro-descendant communities in Minas this imagery played a significant role in the process of identity construction (Tribe 72). Ideally, the Brazilian Church during the baroque worked to establish a homogenous and highly stratified society where the individual knew her place according to class and *casta*; in reality, Brazil was in transformation, socially and economically, becoming a place that incorporated a variety of images from diverse backgrounds. Yet many lower class blacks, in order to survive and thrive, had to encounter alternative ways of subverting the status quo. While there was no space for imagery that overtly highlighted the inequities of the slave system, or that represented African cultural or aesthetic values, these values could be observed in the religious imagery commissioned at the time, as well in the jewelry worn by slave and freed women (Tribe 75).

The diffusion of African cultural imagery and practice permeated the religious atmosphere of the Brotherhoods. The religious Brotherhoods in colonial Brazil were a

place where Africans and Afro-descendants of various “nations” could assemble under the guise of an acceptable and approved Catholic organization. In these spaces, Africans and Afro-descendants organized processions and displays for feast days and other Catholic holy days known as Congadas (Kiddy 124). One such Brotherhood, Our Lady of the Rosary, created elaborate parades in which individuals performed as Kings and Queens from the Kongo. While these “coronations” had been banned, they still continued (Kiddy 124). It was within these religious organizations where Africans and Afro-descendants could “assemble and rebuild some form of cultural identity, using ‘orthodox’ Christian imagery to express their own symbolic needs” (Tribe 73). The brotherhoods illustrate one way in which Africans and Afro-descendants used the Catholic religious space as a camouflage for covert African practice and identity construction.

Moreover, during the mid-eighteenth century, Minas Gerais became the largest region for freed slaves (Dantas 115). There are cases in which Africans petitioned for royal intervention and requested legal representation by African and Afro-descendant individuals for freed slaves abused and subjected to extreme discrimination. In this unique space composed of a large and diverse community of freed slaves, individuals created and performed their “fluid” identities so as to access various social resources and move vertically up the social ladder: “[B]y employing the same markers of social distinction that were often the basis of white privilege, *pardos* and occasionally even *pretos*, were sometimes able to circumvent their ‘inferior condition’” (Dantas 123).

Rosa's identity as a black, African slave woman was forged in this cultural milieu. Coming to Minas Gerais at the age of fourteen, Rosa would have been introduced

to this environment where there were many freed blacks working and thriving in various social roles. She would have observed the overt importance of the church but would have also noticed the covert underscoring of African images, dress and celebrations by the Brotherhoods. The evolution of Rosa's story, as revealed in her Inquisition testimony, illustrates the degree to which syncretic imagery was tolerated within her specific community and also the degree to which it was intolerable. Rosa's religious practice may be understood to have walked the line between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. Her religious practice as a Catholic mystic gained her allies and supporters but it also created snags and tears within the baroque social and religious fabric of Colonial Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. Rosa's Afro-Catholic practices were acceptable and even tolerated up to the point to which her practices went beyond intercultural references and conflated symbology that was typical for the African and Afro-descendant population. In Rosa's case, her popularity grew to a point in which many of her followers referred to her as Santa Rosa, or Madre Rosa and, especially, within the Recolhimento, she was also known as "Abelha Mestra" (Mott 537) or, Queen Bee. Her practices, specifically, outbursts during masses in which she claimed to be possessed by the *Zeladora dos Templos*, interrupting sermons and calling societal members hypocrites and religious backsliders, began to create such a public scandal that social order was threatened. As Donald Ramos argues, while a great degree of heterodox religious and social practice was tolerable in eighteenth century Brazil, it was the gossip generated about a certain action, whether it was true or not, that created more social disorder than the sinful or criminal behavior itself (887).

However, until her encounter with the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio in 1762, Rosa had been practicing her own version of Afro-Catholic worship. She overtly experienced continual possessions. I suggest that these possession experiences may be interpreted as a central aspect of Afro-religious practice known as mounting in which the devotee, in this case Rosa, is “mounted” by her Orishá so as to serve as a medium for divine communication, however, as I discuss below, it may be read as a uniquely syncretic practice of Afro-Yorùbá mounting and Christian mysticism that availed itself to the exorcism ritual. As documented in her own testimony, the testimony of her spiritual confessor Padre Francisco, and other informants, Rosa withstood the exorcism process; often, one isolated exorcism experience or ritual does not produce a release from the possession. The individual exorcism ritual is analogous to a link in a chain. A sequence of exorcisms can construct a chain, which may then be used to bind and eventually drive out, expel, or release the possessing force. In this way Rosa experienced a succession of exorcisms. Moreover, Rosa experienced various visions, which she described in detail to her spiritual confessors. These confessions and details of her visions swayed many of her spiritual confessors to view her as a Catholic visionary mystic. The belief in Rosa as a visionary mystic prompted her spiritual confessor, Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes, to arrange for his nephew, Pedro Rodrigues Arvelos, to purchase Rosa and, eventually, manumit her. Ultimately, this belief in Rosa as a mystic transformed her position. She was seen as a popular saint. This helped her to forge alliances with wealthy and influential community members, such as Coronel João Gonçalves Fraga. These connections allowed her to gain access to education and, eventually, even "a space of her own", where she could control her own worship practices, the *Recolhimento de Nossa*

Senhora do Parto. These practices encompassed her possession experiences and her visions, which I argue reinforced the belief in Rosa as a visionary mystic and popular saint in her community. However, these visionary practices are similar characteristics of both African and Catholic religious and mystical traditions.

Rosa's Possession Experience and Visions: An Afro-Catholic Performance

Rosa simultaneously situates her visions within the Catholic context and incorporates Afro-religious references, specifically, images of Afro-Yorùbá Orishás, or nature/ancestor deities, as I detail below. Rosa's testimonies may be read from an Africanist perspective. Rosa's inclusion of African religious imagery signals her role as agent in her process of constructing an Afro-Catholic identity. Moreover, I suggest that her testimonies reveal an Afro-Catholic performance. Performance theory explains how Rosa reconfigured the trope of the female visionary mystics, stories made real orally and visually as part of her baroque quotidian life, replete with liturgical spectacles and religious displays in Catholic Brazil. I understand Rosa's performances as repeated, or re-enacted, behaviors (Schechner and Turner 36) that are carefully selected from the repertoire (Taylor 20) of female visionary mystical practice towards the end of fomenting a desired perception on the part of others, specifically, the transformation from slave to mystic. As I discussed in chapter two, these repetitive behaviors are grounded in and linked to observations and understandings of exemplary models. Like other iconic Catholic religious women, such as Saint Mary of Egypt (Rosa's namesake), Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa of Ávila, and Margaret Mary Alacoque, Rosa established her identity as a devout Catholic in the eyes of others by her submission to religious practices such as continual missal attendance, the partaking of Holy

Communion, mental prayer and meditation, contemplation, confession and mystical experiences such as visions, possession and ecstatic union.

Rosa tapped into the well of the repertoire of the Catholic visionary mystic. This repertoire was transmitted to Rosa through her indoctrination in baroque Catholic Brazil. Moreover, Rosa's familiarity with the repertoire resulted from her inculcation to the baroque Catholic cultural memory. As Diana Taylor writes, "Cultural memory . . . is a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection" (82). I suggest that in Rosa's imaginary, her religious practice, what I call her performance, was connected to what she understood as the behaviors of previous visionary mystics. Their mystical experiences served as impetus for her performances. In the following example, Rosa's vision of the dove underscores her manipulation of this repertoire, her incorporation of Afro-Yorùbá religious cosmology, and thus, her performance as an Afro-Catholic:

[. . .] [A]ndando ela com uma crioula [Leandra] varrendo a Igreja de São João Batista, viu no centro da cruz um pombo branco, muito fermoso, com os pés vermelhos, unhas e bico tão luzidios que pareciam de ferro, e o dito pombo lhe disse as palavras seguintes: "Haveis de aprender a ler e escrever, que quero fazer um ninho no teu peito". E, chamando ela pela crioula para que visse o dito pássaro, este desapareceu (Mott 79).

[[Rosa] was accompanied by a crioula [Leandra], who was sweeping the floor of the Igreja de São João Batista, when [Rosa] saw in the center of the cross a very beautiful, white [male] dove, with red feet, and with talons and a beak so bright they seemed like glowing iron, and the aforementioned dove said the following words: 'You must learn to read and write, because I want to make a nest in your

chest.' And, when [Rosa] called to the crioula [Leandra] to see the bird, it disappeared (My translation).]

In this vision, Rosa demonstrates her understanding of various cultural paradigms and her vision works on multiple levels. She signals her awareness of the power of education, a resource routinely denied to most individuals. Writing and reading were primarily activities of the upper classes (not only upper classes, but also men and usually religious men), with the majority of the Portuguese-American population being practically illiterate (Haberly 49). Rosa secures her education by appealing to a higher authority than the Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit. This vision reveals her knowledge of Catholic symbolism. She locates this vision within the Church of Saint John the Baptist, thus conflating the importance of her vision with John's vision of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove when he baptized Jesus:

Quando todo o povo estava sendo batizado, também Jesus o foi. E, enquanto ele estava orando, o céu se abriu e o Espírito Santo desceu sobre ele em forma corpórea, como pomba. Então veio do céu uma voz: "Tu és o meu Filho amado; em ti me agrado" (Luke 3: 21-22).

[While all of the people were being baptized, Jesus also went to him [John the Baptist]. And, while [John] was praying, the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit descended upon him [Jesus] in corporeal form, like a [female] dove. Then a voice came from the sky: "You are my beloved Child; in you I am pleased" (My translation).]

In this vision, Rosa appeals to the authority of the celestial hosts cited (sighted) in her vision, and rescripts the trope of the visionary mystic. Importantly, this vision may

be read as an incorporation of African cosmology that blends Brazilian Yorùbá religious references with Catholic ones. The juxtaposition of these two visions fosters an interpretation of syncretic Afro-Catholic symbology in Rosa's version. In Rosa's vision, the Holy Spirit's voice comes from the dove as opposed to emanating from the sky, as in Luke's version. This zoomorphization of the Holy Spirit into an animal and its conflation with the historical figure of Jesus locates this aspect of this vision within the framework of Afro-religious ideology. The African religion brought to Brazil by slaves was animistic (Voeks 182) and appealed to the power of the Orishás --

Ancestor/Deities. There are diverse spellings for this term. Generally, *Orisa* denotes the Ancestor/Deity in its original African context, whereas, the spelling *Orixá*, or Orishá, reveals the Ancestor/Deity as transmitted and transformed within the Brazilian context (Johnson 65). Additionally, the term Orishá carries a twofold meaning as "part nature spirit" and "part deified hero" (Johnson 65):

[A]s the memory of an association between an outstanding individual and an orisa passes into tradition, the distinction between the two will become blurred, and that the traits of the human partner will merge with those of the orisa. In this way, an orisa that started its career as a "force of nature", pure and simple, will come to acquire a strong overlay of deified human individuality (Apter 150).

I suggest that Rosa's overt Catholic vision of the dove represents a covert image of an Orishá. Rosa employs the image of the talking dove to stand in the place of the voice of the Holy Spirit and conflates that natural power with the historical figure of Jesus. The voice in her vision commands her to learn to read and write. This makes Rosa an intermediary for the divine message or, from an Afro-religious perspective, the vessel

of communication for the Orishá (Voeks 111). I understand Rosa's conflation of religious imagery as part of her performance. I use the term performance because her syncretic practice reframes baroque cultural memory and manipulates the repertoire of the Catholic visionary mystic to rearticulate and rework the Catholic imagery to incorporate African symbolism.

The power of cultural memory is that it coalesces with the power of substitution and the power of performance. Through re-behaving, an individual creates a way to become more than herself because she inhabits the role of a previous model. This theoretical concept is termed *Surrogation* (Roach 3). As I outlined in my dissertation introduction, in this process the individual is substituting her reinvented behaviors for what is understood to be the original model. In alignment with Roach's theory, I argue that Rosa's testimonies reveal her behaviors in which she behaved enough like the model of the Catholic visionary mystic to create balance and continuity, but at the same time, Rosa behaved in a unique way so as to inscribe the reenacted behaviors with enough of her own hybrid identity to alter the recreated religious practices, and affect change in others' perceptions.

To facilitate this change, as I examine below, Rosa reframed her visions of the Sacred Hearts to rescript their overt Catholic meaning. Rosa's visions of the Sacred Hearts illustrate both her ability to influence others' perspectives by drawing on Catholic rhetoric. She also infused her visions with Afro religious imagery, thus articulating an Afro-Catholic syncretic practice. Rosa's vision of the Sacred Hearts is constructed in a multilayered fashion. Rosa initially divulges only certain, more overtly orthodox Catholic, aspects of her vision. In 1754, Rosa revealed the first of her visions, in which

she saw the sacred hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Mott 320). When she recounted this vision to her confessor, Frei Agostinho, he ordered the fabrication of an ornate icon of the Three Sacred Hearts. In addition to the Catholic icon, Frei Agostinho ordered the construction of a chapel to display the icon in the Convent of San Antonio in Rio de Janeiro. Rosa affected an immediate change in her surroundings: her vision had secured her a special place within the church to worship an image made from her own vision. Subsequently, Rosa revealed another ambiguous, potentially subversive, vision, in which she saw six Sacred Hearts.

Rosa testifies that she informed her confessor of this amended version of her vision of the Sacred Hearts. Upon hearing this, Frei Agostinho ordered her to “ask God to tell her to whom these hearts belonged” (Mott 325). She states that she obeyed, and in confession, through prayer, she asked God about the significance of the additional hearts. Rosa is very careful never to break the ecclesiastical chain of command. She states that three additional hearts belonged to Santana, São Joachim, and that, according to the voice of God, it was not important to whom the last heart belonged because it could be the Pope, the King of Portugal, her confessor or even herself (Mott 325). After Rosa informed Frei Agostinho about the subsequent vision, he commissioned a new sculpture of the Sacred Hearts, this time with two more hearts (Mott 325). Rosa’s words illustrate how she manipulated the repertoire of the Catholic visionary mystic. She negotiated the conventions of the Catholic hierarchical structure to possibly include herself, so as to accredit herself with the ability to communicate directly with the Godhead.

Based on her visions, and the specific way in which she divulged these visions to her spiritual confessors, Rosa obtained the construction of the Recolhimento in which she

lived, worked and was respected as regent. She secured access to education, learning to read and write, and she became the medium for the Recolhimento's new patrons, the unique five Sacred Hearts. Her visions prompted the fabrication of an icon in their likeness and the construction of a chapel in their honor. Her testimony illustrates how she manipulated her spiritual confessors to gain power and fame within her community, and at the same time, it shows how Rosa laid the foundation for the modification of Catholic imagery and the inclusion of Afro-religious symbols with respect to her visions of the Sacred Hearts.

Rosa consciously framed her behaviors and her visions as Catholic. Her practices and their repetition fit within the pattern of the Catholic female visionary mystic. Thus, these "twice-behaved" (Schechner and Turner 36) behaviors permitted Rosa to recreate, or reconstruct, the previous model for the Catholic visionary mystic and infuse it with new images for her spiritual confessors, the *recolhidas*, her followers within the Recolhimento, and Rosa herself. Rosa's overt Catholic worship conveyed covert Afro-religious, Brazilian Yorùbá references.

This interpretation is supported by evidence of other Afro-religious practice documented during Rosa's lifetime. Rosa was categorized as a Mina slave. As I outlined in Chapter one, this term is vague at best. In Colonial Brazil, the general term Mina was a catch all for many peoples originating in Western African ports, like Whydah, the slave port recorded as Rosa's place of embarkation. Additionally, Yorùbá speakers are documented in the Minas region of Brazil in a 1748 census as "Courana" (Kuramu) slaves.

Rosa testified to be Courana, also known as Kuramu. Interestingly, the Inquisition documents record that in 1747 Maria Josefa from Paracatú, Minas Gerais was prosecuted for Afro-religious practice. Furthermore, she was recorded as a “Courá” slave, another variation of Kuramu (Reis and Mamigonian 78). It is not unlikely given Rosa’s high degree of autonomy, working as a prostitute and a slave in Minas Gerais, that she would have connections to many other slave and freed slave populations living in colonial Brazil. These Afro-peoples’ religious practice was, at the very least, syncretic to some degree and perhaps to a larger extent less syncretic and more Yorùbá. Large-scale mining operations and the associated industries required to feed, clothe and house miners secured a continuous and steady practice of slave importation in colonial Brazil, so much so that Rio de Janeiro replaced Salvador as the capital in 1763 (Restall and Lane 261). Within this space, it is possible to expect that Rosa had been exposed to many forms of Afro-religious practice.

In her deposition testimony to the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio in 1762, Rosa details another version of her Sacred Hearts visions. I suggest that Rosa explicitly incorporates Afro-religious imagery. She carefully constructs a polysemic image with herself at the powerful center of a syncretized Afro-Catholic cosmology:

quando ela, ré, está já com algumas recolhidas na casa da Igreja do Parto, estando fazendo a oração mental, chegando àquele ponto em que se faz o Ato de Fé, crendo-se que se está na presença de Deus, prostrando-se todas e ela, ré, viu uma iluminação muito clara no entendimento com que viu distintamente e lhe figurou uma árvore muito grossa de cor branca com folhas miúdas, por uma parte verdes e pela outra brancas, em cuja árvore estavam os cinco corações que ela, depoente,

tinha visto na missa, e em cima desta árvore estava uma figura coberta com um véu branco, mas muito rico e luzido, que a encobria, e dela estava aquele sexto coração que se lhe representou a ela, ré, no altar de Nossa Senhora na Igreja de Santo Antônio, porém com a diferença de que, nesta ocasião e nas mais em que viu, não tinha divisa alguma, porém desta vez se lhe representou no pé daquela árvore e estava com três cravos nele pregados, e com uma seta trespassado, e deste coração brotava aquele árvore em que estavam os cinco corações (Mott 329).

[When (Rosa), the accused, was with just a few *recolhidas* in the (Recolhimento), practicing mental prayer, coming to the point in which one makes the Act of Faith, believing she was in the presence of God, lying on the ground prostrate herself and the others, [Rosa], the accused, distinctly saw a very clear illumination in her mind. It appeared as a very thick white tree with young, small leaves in which some parts were green and others white. In this tree there were five hearts which she, the accused, had seen at mass, and on top of this tree was a [female] figure covered with a white veil, so rich and shiny, that it enveloped [the figure]. And from her came the sixth heart which [the figure] showed to [Rosa], the accused, at the altar of Our Lady in the Church of Santo Antonio, but with the difference that on that occasion, and the others that she [had seen], the [heart] didn't have a sign, but this time [the heart] presented itself at the foot of the tree and three nails were driven through it, and an arrow piercing it, and, the tree with the five hearts, welled up out of this sixth heart (My translation).]

This vision overtly illustrates a negotiation between Catholic imagery and Afro-religious symbology. It may be read as a more syncretic representation of Rosa's religious practice, in part, because of its timing. As previously outlined, this deposition hearing was not Rosa's first tangle with Ecclesiastical authority. Rosa had been imprisoned, judged and punished in Minas. She had been involved in previous scandals in Rio that had resulted in her expulsion from the *Recolhimento*. However, she had overcome these struggles and had been reincorporated into the Catholic community and permitted to reenter the *Recolhimento*. I suggest that at the time of this deposition, Rosa had every reason to expect that she would work herself through this process based on her previous experiences with religious Catholic authorities in Brazil. Thus, in a sense, Rosa's testimony at this point in her historical trajectory may be read as the most revelatory of her understanding of her own religious role as an Afro-Catholic. This vision facilitates an interpretation of Rosa's religious practice in which she places herself at the foundation of spiritual understanding, much like the role of the medium, or priestess, in the Yorùbá-religion. Rosa sees herself functioning as an intermediary, not only between the mortal and the supernatural realms, but also between the Catholic and the Afro-religious spaces. While the symbol of the tree can be interpreted to have Catholic roots (Mott 330), it is important to consider the African symbology of the tree, specifically, a white tree, within the Brazilian Yorùbá religious practice.

In Brazil, the tree species *gameleira branca* bleeds white latex when it is cut (Voeks 163). The image of the tree takes on sacred form, especially when it serves for the ascension of a divinity within the Afro-religious cosmology and, specifically, within Brazilian Yorùbá practice (163). The thick white tree is the centerpiece of Rosa's

vision. Near the place of Rosa's birth, Whydah, Africa, "[O culto às arvores] . . . era considerado o segundo 'fetiche' em importância" [The tree cult] . . . was considered the second most important fetish] (Verger 520). For Yorùbá practitioners in Brazil, one of the main Orishás is the tree dwelling spirit *Iroko*. Moreover, the *gameleira branca*, known as the *ficus doliaria*, or more specifically, the *ficus gomelleira*, grows in the Mata Atlantica where Rosa lived and was widely regarded as the Iroko tree, the "only *Ficus* species that serves as Candomblé's cosmic tree" (Voeks and Rashford 315). Thus, Rosa's vision of the tree that houses the Sacred Hearts may be interpreted as a reference to this Orishá *Iroko*. In addition, Rosa depicts the image of the green and white *folhas miúdas*, small leaves. The Orishá of leaves is known as *Ossáim* and in one of the Yorùbá creation myths the leaves change from white to green (Voeks 117). Rosa's vision may be a reference to this Afro-religious creation myth and transformation process. Robert Voeks discusses the importance of various leaves to Brazilian Yorùbá practitioners during their ceremonies (137). Thus, the leaves may be read as a symbol of Afro-religious practice.

Beyond this natural imagery of the tree and its leaves, Rosa's vision centers on the sixth heart. In this version of Rosa's vision, she observes a shiny, veiled figure in white that performs the role of medium, revealing to Rosa the significance of the sixth heart. This figure is overtly a reference to the veiled Holy Mother; however, another interpretation suggests that this figure may be the Orishá *Oxalá*, the great sky god and creator signified by "whiteness" (Johnson 37). *Oxalá* prefers lofty locations, such as a tree, and is generally conflated with the image of Jesus Christ (Voeks 81). This image of the veiled figure in white has multiple meanings and can be interpreted as both overtly Catholic, covertly Afro-religious, or, more aptly, as syncretic.

Rosa describes the sixth heart at the base of the tree. In her vision Rosa recounts that up until this point in the sequence of her Sacred Heart visions, the sixth heart was without insignia. In this version of her vision, she describes the heart with three nails and one arrow. This image is an older version of the sacred heart (Giffords 335). A single nail connotes contriteness (Giffords 335). Thus, the heart is experiencing remorse and is affected by guilt. An overtly Catholic interpretation is that the heart belongs to Rosa because the sixth heart signifies a contrite and remorseful heart. However, Rosa's previous visions framed the importance of this sixth heart: in addition to Rosa herself, the heart could have belonged to the Pope, the King, or her confessor: a group that spans a large gap in the early modern social hierarchy. Thus, Rosa may be implying that either one or all of these three individuals should feel remorseful and guilty. This may be the most covert critique of her socially stratified society. Still, all the other hearts and the tree flow up out of this sixth heart in the vision, thus leading to the interpretation that the heart represents Rosa and placing her at the center of the powerful syncretic image. Furthermore, it seems likely that Rosa was, in fact, imbuing her visions with Afro-religious imagery because in her testimony before the Inquisitors in Portugal, Rosa effectively re-framed this vision, sanitizing it of the most heterodox references:

Disse mais, que em um dia, em 1755, estando ela, ré, em oração diante de um oratório que tinha na cela do dito recolhimento, viu uma árvore branca e sobre ela uma vulto como de menino de seis meses, coberto com um pano branco, muito cândido, e, nos ramos da mesma, cinco corações e um abaixo nos pés, como os quais o dito vulto brincava ficando muito mais cândido quando os largava da mão

e se punha em cima de um deles, que era grande, como corão de espinhos (ANTT, Proc. 9065).

[[Rosa] further states, that on a day in 1755, while she, the accused, was in prayer in front of a small chapel in the cell of the recolhimento, she saw a white tree and above it an image of six month old boy, covered with a white cloth, very innocent, in the branches of the tree, five hearts and one below [the boy's] feet, about which the mentioned image bounced playfully becoming even more innocent. Then he stretched out his hand towards them and he pricked himself on top [of the heart's] very large crown of thorns (My translation).]

In this Inquisitorial version of her vision, Rosa's image of the shining, veiled white figure becomes an innocent, semi-nude baby boy. The innocent baby playing with the hearts carelessly pricks himself on the crown of thorns and he becomes the centerpiece of the vision. Rosa's most syncretic version of the vision describes the natural forest setting where the thick, white tree with green and white leaves contextualizes the images and insignias of the various hearts, including the central importance of the heart at the base of the tree. The baby boy replaces Rosa in her own vision. This modification suggests a reading in which Rosa was keenly aware of the heterodox nature of her visions. This awareness illustrates the degree to which Rosa consciously worked to reframe her Afro-Catholic identity depending upon the context. This active re-framing of her identity exemplifies Rosa's performance. Rosa reframed this vision in front of the inquisitors in Lisbon perhaps so as to deflect persecution.

Through *Surrogation*, I offer that Rosa constructed her fame as a popular saint: by re-enacting behaviors attributed to the trope of the Catholic visionary mystic, she positioned herself within the trope and reframed her syncretic practice. This concept in conjunction with the performance concept of *transformation/transportation* may explain how Rosa deployed her agency to change her social status. *Transformation* is linked to performance and interpellates the relationship between religious practice and staged theatre (Schechner 130). *Transformation* and *Transportation* performances coexist and overlap (130). It is during these concurrent types of performances in which the performers are transformed. The sequential, frequent and overlapping performances initiates the transportation and results with the transformation. Thus, this transformation may be understood to occur as a result of a series of transportation performances. In these types of performances, the performer

goes from the “ordinary world” to the “performative world,” from one time/space reference to another . . . [She] plays a character, battles demons, goes into trance, travels to the sky or under the sea or earth: [she] is transformed, enabled to do things “in performance” [she] cannot do ordinarily (Schechner 126).

In the following examples, Rosa's possession experiences illustrate how she is transported from the "ordinary world" into the extraordinary, "performative world." The examples show the ways in which Rosa used the Catholic space to incorporate the Afro-religious practice of "mounting": when the Orishá takes possession of the practitioner to use her body as an intermediary between the natural and supernatural worlds. During a mass in São João del Rei, under the power of her possessing spirit, *Zeladora dos*

Templos, Rosa interrupted a visiting Capuchin priest who was giving a sermon at the Igreja Matriz de Nossa Senhora do Pilar:

Primero advertia as pessoas que mostravam pouca veneração na igreja, e, se não obedeciam, avançava castigando-as, até chegar ao ponto de rasgar-lhes a roupa, como aconteceu na Matriz de São João del Rei, que pregando um barbadinho italiano Frei Luis de Perúgia, morador no Rio de Janeiro, dizendo que os inimigos se perdoassem uns aos outros, senão seriam levados pelos demônios para o inferno, aí Rosa se levantou do lugar e disse em voz alta que ali estavam os demônios para levar para o inferno os que não queriam se perdoar. E caiu no chão como morta (Mott 97).

[First [Rosa] warned the people who showed little veneration in church, and, if they did not obey, she moved towards them, chastising them, even up to the point in which she would tear their clothes, like what happened in Matriz de São João del Rei, in which the little, bearded Italian, Frei Luis de Perúgia, resident of Rio de Janeiro, was preaching, saying that enemies should forgive one another, and if not, they would be carried off by demons to hell. At that point, Rosa stood up from her place and said in a loud voice the demons were there, ready to carry off to hell those who would not forgive. And [she] fell to the ground as if she were dead (My translation).]

Rosa's behavior may be understood as a Brazilian Afro-Yorùbá possession experience and highlights one of her performances where religious ritual merges with the theatrical, signaling transportation from ordinary to extraordinary. Brazilian syncretic religious practice understands the realm of the divine to be the sacred space of the

Orishás, the African deities (Voeks 179). According to Afro-religious practice, *Olorún*, the supreme God in African cosmology, does not descend to earth but sends different Orishás to take over the devotee's body (76). A central aspect of African worship is "mounting": The Orishá takes possession of the Afro-religious practitioner to use her body to communicate with those still bound to the earth (Johnson 47). Rosa named her possessing spirit the *Zeladora dos Templos*, literally, "Caretaker of the Temples". Interestingly, Afro-Brazilian places of worship, called *terreiros*, are defined as temples to their Nature/Ancestor deities, the Orishás (73). When this spirit controlled Rosa she would become aggressive and antisocial and would denounce or critique what she perceived to be inappropriate, disrespectful, or hypocritical behavior (Mott 96). Under the guise of her possessing spirit, *Zeladora dos Templos*, Rosa covertly infused her Catholic practice with aspects of African religiosity.

Rosa claimed that her visions came from various supernatural forces, including God and the Devil. Susceptibility to both divine and diabolical influences appeals to the tradition of religious female visionary mystic (Sluhovsky 10). In this way, Rosa's possession experience is couched within the Catholic tradition. However, her possessing spirit, *Zeladora dos Templos*, did not suggest inappropriate behavior, as one would imagine the Devil might suggest. In fact, under the guise of the *Zeladora dos Templos*, Rosa responded in contrary by admonishing other people's religious backsliding. I argue that it is possible to understand Rosa's possession experience as African-inspired rather than diabolically inspired.

Rosa used the trope of the visionary mystic and the Catholic space to her own advantage. Her possession experiences took place in public settings during mass, where

she openly chastised individuals of higher social standing for their religious hypocrisy. By mocking the other parishioners, she inserted her opinion regarding their lack of morality. After these experiences, she would black out and fall down. By interrupting the priest during his sermon, she positioned her authority over his. One might say that she upstaged him. Significantly, by affirming what the priest was saying, that the demons would come and take the unforgiving to hell, she did not contradict the Catholic hierarchy but used its arguments to bolster her own power -- her ability to see the demons. Rosa's possession experiences can be read as Afro-religious practice. Moreover, they illustrate in conjunction with her visions the repeated ways in which Rosa was transported from the terrestrial to celestial. By using Schechner's understanding of transportation performance, it is possible to see how Rosa constructs her fame, amasses a following, and transforms others' perceptions about her practices.

Rosa's increasing fame within her community and her repeated public displays of possession brought about her encounter with the Portuguese Inquisition. Rosa's admonishing of Dona Quitéria, the wife of Dr. José Gomes, an important educated man of the community, caused such scandal that it resulted in her confrontation with the Portuguese Inquisition. Rosa had been praying in the Franciscan church, Igreja de São Antônio, when she saw Dona Quitéria behaving incorrectly, talking with another woman during the mass. Rosa, under the guise of her possessing spirit, descended upon Dona Quitéria:

Houve entre Rosa e Dona Quitéria uma grande contenda, caindo possuída a negra como morta e sem sentidos no chão. Tirada para fora da igreja aos rastos e empurrões, querendo o juiz do crime do Rio de Janeiro prendê-la, foi dissuadido

pelo Tenente Gaspar dos Reis, que disse-lhe que ela não era culpada, mas sim um espírito que a impelia. E o novo provincial do convento disse que Rosa era um cachorra e embusteira e andava amotinando o povo e que mandaria tirar-lhe o hábito de São Francisco e açoitá-la. E, por seu empenho e de Dona Quitéria, foi Rosa expulsa do recolhimento por ordem do vigário geral, com proibição de nunca mais entrar no dito Recolhimento do Parto (Mott 387).

[There was a great struggle between Rosa and Dona Quitéria, in which the possessed *negra* fell to the ground senseless as if she were dead. Dragged and pushed, [Rosa] was thrown out of the church. The criminal judge of Rio de Janeiro wanted to arrest her but he was dissuaded by Lieutenant Gaspar dos Reis, who said that it wasn't [Rosa's] fault, but that a spirit impelled her. And, the new provincial of the convent [Caetano] claimed that [Rosa] was a bitch and a liar and that she went about inciting the people to riot, and he would command that the Franciscan habit be stripped off of her and she be whipped. By his efforts and those of Dona Quitéria, Rosa was expelled from the Recolhimento by order of the general vicar and prohibited from returning to the said Recolhimento do Parto (My translation).]

In this testimony, again Rosa displays her Afro-religious practice. She allows herself to be "mounted" by her Orishá, *Zeladora dos Templos*. Rosa's possession experiences exhibit adherence to African cosmological precepts and her visions illustrate the degree to which she conflated both Catholic and African religious imagery. This conflation signals an active negotiation between these two cosmologies. Her visions underscore her syncretic Afro-Catholic beliefs and reveal her manipulation of the trope of

the female visionary mystic to secure access to societal resources. She situates her visions within the Catholic context and then incorporates Afro-religious references, specifically, images of Brazilian Yoruba Orishás. This incorporation of syncretic images and her repetition of possession experiences are the markers of Rosa's Afro-Catholic identity and are uniquely African. Thus, they should not be read as diabolic but as the behavior of an Afro-religious devotee.

Rosa's Afro-Catholic Possession Experiences

The notion that Rosa was a devote Catholic female mystic afflicted with visions and voices from both Christ and the Devil in early modern Brazil, and at the same time, an equally fervent practitioner of a form of African Yorùbá religion, what is understood contemporarily as Candomblé spirit-possession, seems contradictory to the modern reader. Yet, this is such the case for Rosa who lived, prayed and worshipped during the baroque period in Colonial Brazil. The growing power and influence of the lay religious in Colonial Brazil functioned as the backdrop for Rosa's construction of her own new syncretic identity as an Afro-Catholic. Rosa experienced the baroque reality in a tangible way: She believed in her own ability to affect change in her surroundings, she believed in the power of the image and the imagination, and consequently the performance or representation of that image to persuade her audience and affect change in herself and those around her. Baroque culture worked to involve its audience in an active participatory fashion: "Frente a su destinatario, la cultura barroca se propone moverlo . . . Uno de los recursos de que se vale para alcanzar tales objetivos [. . .] consiste en introducir o implicar y, en cierto modo, hacer participe de la obra al mismo espectador" (Maravall 169). In typical baroque fashion, Rosa reworked the imagery of the Catholic

Church and she used this religious space to perform her mystical visions. However, her experiences were far from orthodox. Although Rosa employed Catholic imagery and manipulated the trope of the female visionary mystic, many of her supernatural experiences were overtly perceived as diabolical trances.

This seemingly contradictory and apparently paradoxical practice, simultaneous divine and diabolical possession, may have been more problematic for those around Rosa than for Rosa herself. While the baroque zeitgeist in Colonial Brazil may have contextualized Rosa's religious practice to the point to which her possession experiences were somatically barely indistinguishable, in the minds of ecclesial authorities they were clearly different.

“[T]he clear distinction between mystical experience (divine possession) and diabolical possession came into being not in the minds and bodies of the possessed persons themselves, but rather among the exorcists, theologians, and inquisitors who feared the individualistic and anti-hierarchical potentialities of ecstatic and charismatic religious activities” (Sluhovsky 151).

Yet, while many church authorities may have found Rosa's particular religious practice disturbing, others, like her spiritual confessor and exorcist Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes, did not. However, with regard to Rosa's lived experiences in Colonial Brazil it is important to highlight how she and her Catholic follows may have viewed her mystic practice of divine possession and her repeated use of the exorcism ritual as part of the Christian mystical tradition. Rosa's religious practice with regard to both the use of mystical visions and the exorcism ritual and be understood in various ways. In this section, I illustrate how the use of the exorcism ritual may be understood as way to heal

traumatic physical and psychological pain and the role of narrativizing traumatic memories for this healing process. Additionally, I trace the practice of divine spirit possession and affective mysticism to establish the context in which to read and interpret Rosa's vision in her final testimony.

Then, in the subsequent section, I link the concepts of possession and exorcism to Rosa's use of food imagery. I highlight the Catholic tradition of conflating food imagery with the image of nourishing and redeeming female flesh and provide a close reading of Rosa's final testimony. In sum, I suggest that Rosa uses the mystical possession experience and the exorcism experience interchangeably so as to heal herself from her trauma as a Middle Passage survivor and to rearticulate her own female-centered discourse that emphasizes the nourishing characteristic of her own flesh and her position as an intermediary for Christ's message. In this way, she surrogates the role of the Christ figure and his position as redeeming flesh during the Eucharistic practice and performs the role of the female visionary mystic. This reframing of the Eucharistic space allows Rosa to transform her identity as a slave to an affective mystic, intermediary for the divine, and a true servant of God.

Doctrinally, Christianity does not recognize peripheral possession. I.M. Lewis (1971) studies the social conditions that give rise to ecstatic phenomena and suggests that possession cults can be divided into two categories, one of which is peripheral possession cults. These spirit possession cults co-exist with dominant moralistic religions and incorporate marginal membership, such as women or low status men, who are possessed by peripheral spirits (Morris 39). Peripheral spirits are understood as those which have no direct moral responsibility to the community and are recognized as "foreign, alien or

amoral” spirits (39). Significantly, while Moshe Sluhovsky suggests that “there are no examples in the Christian tradition of individuals seeking a symbiotic relationship with a satanic possession entity by means of an established ritual (trance)” (151), he does state that there is “an unrelated Christian tradition of possession by divine spirits, . . . Christian mysticism” (151). Moreover, Christian mystics experience possession by divine spirits and these societies that engage in peripheral possession formed practices to cure and reintegrate possessed persons through ceremonies of exorcism (150). Additionally, these exorcisms incorporated “special dance and drumming ceremonies [which] are orchestrated to invoke both positive and negative spirits to possess individuals” (151). Importantly, exorcism may be understood as an iatrogenic process, that is, a process in which the illness (in Rosa’s case, the spirit possession) was caused by or related to a medical examination or treatment (in Rosa’s case, the exorcism ritual) in which the interaction between the client (Rosa) and the healer (Padre Francisco) builds a narrative that creates meaning of the client’s situation and thus facilitates her reintegration into society (150). Thus, it is possible to see how Rosa’s peripheral possession experiences with her *Zeladora dos Templos* may have been understood as part of the tradition of Christian mystics. At the same time, Rosa’s possession experiences may overtly be compared to the Afro-Yorúbá religious practice of mounting, as detailed in chapter three. Moreover, the Catholic exorcism rite may have provided traumatic healing for Rosa as a survivor of the Middle Passage and her slave experiences in colonial Brazil, fulfilling a psychological need for Rosa.

Rosa's Trauma and Her Mystic Experiences

Rosa suffered as an objectified body during the Middle Passage, she suffered as an exploited sexual body upon arrival, and she was whipped and publicly ridiculed as a result of conflict with members Portuguese Inquisition's social network in colonial Brazil. As I have argued in chapters one and two, Rosa related her suffering to Christ's suffering and, through the process of *Surrogation*, she may have functioned as a substitute for Christ's suffering in the minds of her followers within the freed and slave communities of colonial Brazil. Perhaps, her suffering as a victim of the slave trade resonated with their own experiences as survivors of the Middle Passage and as subjugated people in the New World slave society. On another level, Rosa's use of the exorcism ritual may be linked to her mystic visions and may have offered a way to structure meaning and create a narrative for her traumatic memories associated with her survival experience.

The survival experience is synonymous with a mystical one because it "involves states of consciousness, reported experiences, and visions that parallel those reported by mystics" (Culbertson 177). The various facets of the survival experience, and similarly, the body memories that accompany them, "[are] to the unsuspecting initiate sufficiently incomprehensible to be recalled in any way that admits of context or understanding; it simply has no narrative frame. It is not constructed, merely present; haphazardly rooted in cultural elements because the experience and its context are unlearned, spontaneous" (177). It is possible to understand the connection between the trauma and violations that Rosa suffered, first upon her sale into slavery, then the subsequent embarkation and transport across the Atlantic, typified by its three-month-long daily deprivation of basic

sustenance and continuous exposure to various mental and physical abuses, and her subsequent visions. Perhaps, Rosa, without a framework for comprehending what was transpiring, needed to reintegrate her memories of trauma. The abuses she suffered may be understood as fragmented body memories: Rosa was unable to connect the pain and suffering she experienced as a six year old girl to the larger system of the transatlantic slave trade. Later, Rosa manipulated the space of the Catholic exorcism ritual to construct meaning for her pain. Perhaps this process permitted her to reintegrate these memories of pain into her psyche in order to regain her psychological balance. An individual's visions provide a way to "breakup [the] elements of the experience into body memories unconnected to the present or the self and undiminished by the passage of time" (Culbertson 178). This may offer an explanation of Rosa's use of the exorcism ritual and partially explain her mystical visions, and as I discuss below, Rosa's use of food imagery and her emphasis on her role as nourishing and life-giving may be read as her way of coping or compensating for her deprivation of food during her slave experience.

I suggest Rosa's visions of both divine and diabolical spirits, as well as her use of the exorcism ritual, may be understood in the following way: Rosa's violent abuse as part of the slave system, was an attempt by the abusers (participants in the slave trade) to destroy her perception of self. In a social way, the structure of the slave system worked to reinforce the social and economic hierarchy where Rosa was seen as a commodity, not as human. In order for her to survive this type of debasement and dehumanization, she had to fracture the bodily experiences into manageable pieces. When Rosa regained some of her autonomy, and was not subjected to such continually frequent abuses, these body memories were reintegrated into her world concept through the narrative form of visions

that manifested uniquely within her baroque reality, and Rosa asserted her agency in the retelling of these visions.

[F]or the destruction of the self is a social act, most fundamentally pushing the self back into its cellular, nonsocial, surviving self, and at the same time fusing the self with that of a demanding and destroying other. To return fully to the self as socially defined, to establish a relationship again with the world, the survivor must tell what happened. This is the function of narrative. The task then is to render body memories tellable, which means to order and arrange them in the form of a story, linking emotion with event, event with event, and so on. In so doing it becomes possible to return the self to its legitimate social status as something separate, something that tells, that recounts its own biography, undoing the grasp of the perpetrator and reestablishing the social dimension of the self lost in the midst of violation (Culbertson 179).

Thus, I suggest that Rosa's mystical visions and her practice of *imitatio christi* -- the ways she linked her suffering to Christ's suffering -- as well as her use of the exorcism ritual, worked to create meaning for Rosa and tell her story as a victim of the slave trade and her exploitation in colonial Brazil.

Additionally, we may read Rosa's mystical visions and a direct result of her trauma as a Middle Passage survivor. Feelings of helplessness and inability to change one's surroundings define a space and an experience when the environment is seen as the primary cause of the trauma (Decker citing Vaughan 24). Moreover, a new sense of transpersonal identity is the result of the discovery of an internal reality, independent of, but capable of interacting with, the environment. This suggests that mystical awareness

signals psychological functioning of the transpersonal identity. “The transpersonal self is not identified exclusively with the separate self, but has, by virtue of direct experience and disidentification from ego, discovered the universal ground of being that sustains it” (Vaughan 13). Thus, when the trauma is realized, the individual must modify her belief system and self-concept: “[T]he very modification of belief may be accompanied by the pain of one’s emotional investment in the original beliefs” (Decker 24). Thus, these traumatic and painful experiences rooted in transit and within the space of her Brazilian slave society, and specifically, the mining community of Minas Gerais where she worked as a prostitute and slave in the first half of the eighteenth century, were contributing factors to the development of Rosa’s self-identity as an Afro-Catholic that intimately linked her slave experiences to images of religious suffering. I suggest that these experiences compelled her to modify or adopt a multi-consciousness perspective with regard to her African-origin belief system and the new belief system emerging in the baroque Catholic-Brazilian setting. In order to tell her story, the story of her trauma, she needed to develop a narrative that functioned within the Catholic framework. Rosa’s descriptions of her visions may be understood in this way. Rosa’s traumatic experience in the Middle Passage, as well as her first experiences in Brazil in the Freguesia de Nossa Senhora da Candelária in Rio de Janeiro where she was exploited and raped, and later as a slave and prostitute in Minas Gerais, may have prompted her mystical experiences. Thus in one way, the exorcism ritual may be seen as a means to forge a healing narrative that facilitates an individual’s reintegration into society.

In another way, an exorcism functions as a marker that underscores the specific kind of threat that female mystics, and in this case Rosa, posed for the male dominated

clergy of the Catholic Church in the early modern period. Consequently, the practice of divine possession apparently disappeared in the late medieval and early modern period, and along with it, its link to self-transformation. Significantly, this muting of divine possession during the late medieval and early modern period was a gendered development. “The ascendancy and popularity of female mystics between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries compelled the Church to determine who could become a ‘medium’ for divine knowledge, and whether women should or could enjoy this privilege (Sluhovsky 151). Importantly, there is a distinction between ecstatic, or affective mysticism, and speculative forms of mysticism in Christianity. Speculative mysticism emphasizes the systematic progress toward the knowledge of God through learning, illumination, and contemplation and ecstatic, or affective mysticism, values sensory experiences, “passing beyond”, and “unknowing” as the correct ways to contact the divine without intermediaries (153). Affective mysticism grew in popularity beyond the twelfth century because it promoted the idea of love and experience, which links the individual soul with God. Moreover, this reorientation, or transformation into what God is, stemmed out of older traditions and was influenced by Franciscan theologies. The cumulative perspective is that female mystics identified with Christ’s humanity, specifically his Incarnation and suffering, and experienced his love through “intense rapture, trance, and ecstasy, levitation, stigmatism, and other bodily phenomena” (154). In sum, it was this unmonitored and unmediated reliance on self-transformation to understand God’s love and not the reliance on the Church or the male clergy in particular that “raised suspicion and anxiety among the episcopacy” (154). This type of affective mysticism has a unique transformative quality for the practitioner.

Female mystics transformed themselves by experiencing directly God's love in individual states of trance or meditation; therefore, they had little, if not no need at all, for male clergy as spiritual intermediaries, threatening to upset the balance of power within the male dominated Catholic realm. While Rosa's possession experiences and her use of the exorcism ritual may be understood as part of the tradition of divine spirit possession and affective mysticism, as well as the Afro-Yorùbá practice of mounting, it is imperative to consider the practical and psychological need it played to address the trauma of Rosa's lived experiences. Rosa's traumatic experience as a survivor of the Middle Passage and an exploited slave in Brazil may have been helped through her exorcisms and affective mystical experiences. We can read her use of the exorcism as a way to construct a healing narrative that makes meaning out of her painful experiences. This may have permitted her reintegration into society and at the same time provided more possibilities for her own intervention into her historical trajectory. Additionally, these exorcisms may have functioned as a space to reconstruct Afro-Yorùbá religious practice, which seemed congruent to Catholic affect mystic practice within her baroque society.

The Heavenly Hostess: Rosa's Reinvention of Food Imagery as Redeeming Flesh

Rosa not only used the trope of the female visionary mystic and the repertoire of female sanctity to incorporate Afro-religious practice and imagery into overtly Catholic representations and rhetoric, as described above in the close reading of Rosa's vision of the Sacred Hearts and the white tree, but she also re-framed her religious practice to elaborate a discourse about her role as a source of nourishment and redeeming flesh. This image of redeeming flesh conforms to the tradition of female sanctity by appealing to the conflated image of Mary nourishing Christ's infant body and his body as

nourishment for Christians, as I describe below. Throughout Rosa's testimony, she reframes the trope of the Catholic female visionary mystic and reworks the repertoire of female sanctity. She recounts that her visions occurred during times of meditation and internal prayer, as well as during times of contemplation. As outlined in Chapter two, the terms Rosa employed during her deposition, “oração mental” and “contemplação”, signal her awareness of differentiated religious practices. Rosa’s testimony underscores the various physical afflictions she experienced during her visions: the sensation of the air as hot as boiling water pouring over her, the rigidity in her limbs and face while contemplating an image of the Virgin Mary, the feeling of the wind slamming her against an invisible cross, and the loss of her senses while being spiritually transported to various Catholic churches. The inclusion and reworking of these Catholic practices signal Rosa’s intent to situate herself under the arch of the Catholic visionary mystic. Specifically, Rosa's testimony illustrates the degree to which she actively worked to make herself seem similar to other Catholic visionary mystics. For example, Marie De L'Incarnation, “never let up in prayer” (Mali 137). Similarly, Rosa employed this same practice of ejaculatory prayer (spontaneous vocalized prayer). Rosa also engaged in other Catholic practices, such as mental prayer, spiritual writing, continual confession and frequent partaking of communion. Importantly, Rosa relates that often her visions and the voices she heard during these visions came to her while consuming Holy Communion. This is a leitmotif for female religious (Bynum 59).

In the following discussion, I offer a close reading of one of Rosa’s last recorded visions in which she describes the voice of the Archangel Michael that emanated from the Communion host. Within this Eucharistic space, Rosa draws on the repertoire of female

sanctity, and in Catholic tradition, reworks of the image of nourishing female flesh. Specifically, Rosa employs food imagery and positions herself as a nourishing and life-giving Heavenly Hostess and Banquet Attendant. This use of food imagery reinvents the image of Mary's breast milk as a link to the divine Incarnate. I suggest Rosa deploys this imagery to elaborate a discourse about her religious role as medium for Christ's voice. I surmise that this rearticulation reveals Rosa's role as a reinvented female savior figure, the Heavenly Hostess.

In her fifth and last recorded session with the Tribunal in June of 1765, Rosa reworks Catholic discourse to authorize her position as life-giving nourisher: Rosa links her nourishing power to the nourishing power of food:

e da hóstia que estava para comungar acrescentou as palavras seguintes = Tu serás a Abelha mestra Recolhida no cortiço do amor, fabricareis doce favo de mel para pores na Mesa do celestial banquetiador, para sustento, e alenta dos seus amigos convidados = e perguntando ela Ré ao Senhor na oração o que queria dizer isto, que ouvira, lhe disse o Senhor do que era a sua confissão e que desta mesmo devia dar conta aos zeladores da honra de Senhor e que ela agora entende se verifica na confissão que faz nesta Mesa (Processo 9065 fol. 38r-38v).

and the following words came forth from the Eucharistic host = You shall be the Queen Bee sheltered in love's beehive, you shall make sweet honeycombs to prepare as hostess to the heavenly banquet table, to nourish and feed His invited friends = and [Rosa], the accused, asking the Lord in prayer what this meant, what was heard, the Lord told [her] that this was her confession and that she should tell

it to the Lord's honorable zealots, and that now she understands and verifies her confession entered before this tribunal [my translation].

Rosa describes how at the moment she received communion, she heard a voice emanate from the communion wafer and describe her as the Mother Bee, or Queen Bee, of Love's Beehive, the one who prepares the food, sets the celestial banquet table and feeds, nourishes and attends the Lord's guests. I suggest that these words may be read to reveal Rosa's role as a kind of hostess and heavenly banquet attendant. In a previous portion of Rosa's testimony, she identifies this voice as that of the Archangel Michael. Rosa deploys the voice of the Archangel Michael to authorize her supernatural experience, situating it within the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy. Then, the voice depicts her superior position as *Abelha Mestra*. The image of the Mother Bee, or Queen Bee, may underscore Rosa's value for her physical labor within her religious community, perhaps like Úrsula within the convent of Santa Clara. Additionally, the phrase "cortiço do amor", which I translate as "love's beehive", may be an intertextual reference to venerable Frei Antonio das Chagas' spiritual letter 235 written to his sister, which was published in a collection of his letters in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In this letter, he employs the image of the beehive to describe the actions of a true Christian and her inner spiritual state as a vessel for God's goodness:

o cortiço está vazio, para que se possa encher de mel, necessario he que nós
tambem estejamos vazios das cousas do mundo, se queremos que Deos nos encha
das cousas do Ceo; tanto que o cortiço está em seu lugar, assim como as abelhas
vem a fazer nelle a colmea, assim vem as virtudes a fazer em nós as obras de
Deos (Godinho 423).

While it is not within the scope of this chapter to outline the possible written texts Rosa may have had access to during her education under the tutelage of her various spiritual directors, I suggest that Rosa's use of the image of the beehive to emphasize the value of a true servant of God has precedent in Chagas' letters and may signal Rosa's manipulation of Catholic discourse. More importantly, the use of the term *cortiço* may not only be a rearticulation of Catholic discourse, it suggests a reinvention of the use of food imagery to depict the female flesh.

In Rosa's vision, the voice employs food imagery to authorize Rosa's position as hostess and heavenly banquet attendant. She is to prepare sweet honeycombs to nourish and feed the invited guests. The phrase "para sustento, e alenta" cannot be underestimated. This may be interpreted as a direct reference to the tradition of the use of food imagery to symbolize the female flesh. Rosa's invocation of the food imagery may signify for Rosa the importance of the female body as nourishment by conflating it with the nourishing power of the Eucharistic practice -- the consumption of the body of Christ, and as previously noted, function as a tactic for coping with the deprivation of food during her suffering in the Middle Passage. Here, Rosa rearticulates a practice from the repertoire of female sanctity by reinventing an image of the female heavenly hostess. This image may work to underscore Rosa's closeness to Christ and her superior position as an affective mystic and as a medium, or vessel, for His divine words. Writing about the Middle Ages, Carolyn Walker Bynum states that:

women did not draw from the traditional notion of the symbolic dichotomy between male and female any sense of incapacity for virtue, for spiritual growth, or for salvation. Women writers tended either to ignore their own gender, using

androgynous imagery of the self . . . or to embrace their femaleness as a sign of closeness to Christ . . . If anything, women drew from the tradition a notion of the female as physical an emphasis on their own redemption by Christ who was supremely physical because supremely human . . . Subsuming the male/female dichotomy into the more cosmic dichotomy divine/human, women saw themselves as the symbol for all humanity (Bynum 263).

Rosa's visions conform to the mystical tradition of the female body as nurturing and redeeming. These visions unite the value of food as basic sustenance with spiritual sustenance. Rosa's reworking of food imagery signifies the importance of the female role to facilitate nourishment while at the same time conflates this role with the presence of Christ's flesh embodied in the Communion Host, which nourishes Catholic practitioners. Specifically, the use of the Eucharistic space and the food imagery links powerful images of food and its nourishing quality to the image of Christ and his nourishing spiritual quality to the image of his body symbolized in the Eucharist sacrament. This may suggest that Rosa envisioned herself as part of Christ's body and she performed her evolving identity and her conceptualization of self as provider of spiritual sustenance in her visions with the use of food imagery.

Rosa's vision may be read as her active practice of making meaning of her own suffering and trauma. Rosa envisioned herself as part of Christ's body and she performed her evolving identity and her conceptualization of self as spiritual sustenance in her visions and food imagery. The body may be understood as the "material vehicle of the psychological self" (Lester 190) and functions as a metaphor for the self and often the concept of the body and the psychological self become conflated. Consequently, "food,

as a substance that traversed the boundary between ‘me’ and ‘not me’ . . . may be symbolically elaborated and used to negotiate and reestablish the boundaries of self in response to culturally constructed concerns about gender, sexuality, autonomy, and identity” (Lester 190). Various biosexual female processes, such as menstruation, sexual intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation, challenge these boundaries of the body and at times become the cultural focal point of ideological and value systems that speak to women's autonomy versus their dependence (190). Women may use food and food imagery to test these boundaries and regain their own agency. When describing the metaphor of eating as worship, “eating was often synonymous with incorporation or becoming . . . in cultural terms, a woman’s body could be metaphorically and literally conflated with food. What entered the body as a food became part of the woman, changing her actual constitution. “A desire to become Christ was thus expressed in a metaphor of eating and incorporation” (Lester 209). The pivotal Catholic religious practice, the Eucharistic practice, creates a metaphor of eating as worship.

I argue that Rosa reworks the medieval tradition of the female body as nurturing and redeeming and conflates the value of food as basic sustenance with spiritual sustenance as a consequence of her experience of deprivation during the Middle Passage and, as a part of the female mystical tradition she internalized in her Catholic baroque setting. Within the Catholic tradition, there is a traceable evolution of the imagery of the female flesh as nourishing and life giving (Bynum 269). Moreover, there are multiple possible meanings of the Eucharist for early modern readers and spectators of liturgical performances. This compendium of female food imagery abounds in Catholic tradition: “Christ . . . had to be seen as taking his flesh from Mary. This sense that Christ

as body is formed from Mary's body [led to the argument] that it is exactly female flesh - [. . .] that restores the world" (Bynum 265). Medieval people and then early modern Catholic readers and lay and popular religious practitioners in Ibero-America did not merely associate body/flesh/matter with woman but specifically, the woman's body with food: "Woman was food because breast milk was human being's first nourishment -- the one food essential for survival" (Bynum 270). Furthermore, both men and women perceived the body of Christ on the cross, "which in dying fed the world, as in some sense female" (270).

Rosa, in fact, reworks this female food imagery. She employs the visionary space and food imagery to directly link herself to Christ when she is described as nursing the Christ child. In a letter included in Rosa's inquisition testimony, Faustina, one of the *recolhidas* and daughter of Rosa's former owners, describes Rosa as baby Jesus's wet-nurse: "o Menino Jesus vinha pentear o cabelo de Rosa e ela lhe dava de mamar" (Mott 475). This image reframes the relationship between wet nurse, or nourishing mother, and the Christ child. First, nursing is one of the biosexual processes that involves boundary transversment, and highlights women's ascribed gender roles. Second, that the action of nursing illustrates the body as food and the dependent relationship between the provider and the receiver. Thus, we can see that given Rosa's cultural context, her ascribed gender role as nurturer and provider of food can be subverted when she authors herself as the provider of life-giving nourishment to the most holy vessel, the Christ child.

Rosa's use of food imagery, and specifically, that as Christ's wet-nurse, is not unique. There was a rich tradition of visual imagery as well as Catholic discourse that conflated food imagery and eating practices with the female body, specifically, the body

of Jesus's mother, Mary. Specifically, Jean Gerson was a fifteenth century French scholar, reformer and writer. His works explored mystic discourse and he authored the texts that were routinely used to determine whether female religious were divinely or diabolically possessed. Moreover, "[Jean] Gerson [uses] symbols of eating and nourishment to establish Mary's body as a dining chamber where Mary herself provides a banquet at which all of the graces of the Holy Spirit become food for Christian believers" (Ellington 50). Furthermore, the image of "breast milk was actually the mother's blood, changed by some mysterious process into food for her children. Women who were breast-feeding, therefore, were believed to be sacrificing a portion of their own blood to sustain their offspring" (133). In this way, we may interpret Rosa's vision in which she describes herself as the heavenly hostess and banquet attendant as an image that conflates the redeeming and nourishing power of Christ's body, as symbolized during the Eucharistic practice, with Rosa's own authorized position to provide to nourishment and function as an intermediary for Christ's message. Significantly, "[c]hief among all bodily mediators of power and grace was the glorified flesh of Christ himself, present in the Eucharist. The importance of the Host and of the saints' bodies as channels of communication with the spiritual world was reinforced by the primarily oral nature of all communication" (141).

As stated above, Gerson's writings are not limited to discourses of the female body imagery as food and its relationship to Christ's flesh. He also wrote about the distinctions between divine and demonic possession. Gerson encapsulates his theology about the discernment between the divine and the diabolical with regard to affective mysticism in his three published treatises *De Distinctione Verarum Visionum a Falsis*

(1400-1401), *De Probatione Spirituum* (1415), and *De Examinatione Doctrinarum* (1423). These works became the standard for all subsequent writings on the topics of demon possession and mysticism. In these works, Gerson extolls the personality and practices of the possessed and outlines the possible ways to determine whether individuals, and in particular women, were actually possessed by the divine or by the demonic. Additionally, Gerson's works *De contemptu mundi* and *Imitatio Christi* were "grouped into two large anthologies . . . and published under the supervision of Luis de Granada" (Carvalho 54). Again, it is not within the scope of this chapter to consider the circulation of textual productions and an itemized account of the published religious works that Rosa may have had access to during her literary education. However, it is significant that "one of the Archbishop Cisneros's many interventions in the renovation of Christian spirituality post-1500 was the establishment of a university press, with subventions for the translations of numerous medieval spiritual treatises by both male and female authors" (Boon 132) and that "Jean Gerson . . . published severe warnings against relying on any understanding of God received in the form of a vision" (131).

Granted, while Gerson's writings are removed both geographically and temporally from Rosa's Afro-Brazilian experience, they are, interestingly enough, connected thematically to Rosa's condition. Rosa lived, worked and learned alongside different religious persons, who may have used Gerson's texts. Rosa had more than a dozen different spiritual confessors involved in her Catholic indoctrination (Mott 257). First and foremost, her spiritual director and exorcist, Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes most assuredly had amassed a collection of works that treated the process of exorcism rites and possession experiences. Additionally, Rosa's Franciscan spiritual director in

Rio, Frei Agostinho de São Jose most likely had a collection of books on treating spiritual discernment. Rosa heard a call to write by a voice in a vision, and afterward, with the approval and help of her spiritual director, Frei Agostinho de São Jose, she was placed under the tutelage of Maria Teresa do Sacramento and José Gomes (256). Moreover, she learned to read and write from prayers and creeds, the Holy Scriptures, various sermons as well as the lives of the saints. “Em menos de dois anos de orientação espiritual, a vexada africana revela estar instruída não só em Teologia e nas Sagradas Escrituras, como também sobre a vida dos santos” (265).

Whether Rosa heard sermons that either incorporated some of Gerson’s ideas, or whether she possibly had access to some of his writings, is for further investigation. However, there are many parallels between the way in which Rosa presented her visions of the flesh and the Incarnation of Christ and, more importantly, the ways that she carefully adhered to the suggestions outlined by Gerson to differentiate between a false and a true female mystic. It was this performance that bordered between orthodox and heterodox religious practice spurred Rosa’s local fame.

Rosa’s growing popularity challenged the status quo of the elite in Rio de Janeiro, as evidenced by her many encounters with the social network of Inquisitors within colonial Brazil. “Inquisitions [functioned] as an institution for the policing of political-theology. In a theistic society, heresy, because it violates divine law, also violates civil law” (Schorsch 11). The Portuguese Inquisition was used by Brazilian and Portuguese elite to control religious heterodoxy and foster social homogeneity. Rosa’s performance in the baroque religious space moved her discourse of a reified female role to center stage in the imaginaries of her religious followers, which included her spiritual confessors and

previous owners. She conflated her suffering body with Christ's suffering body and she represented a type of hostess for members of her colonial society. This afforded her the space to surrogate, in Roach's terms, Christ's space as Host in her own imaginary, as well as the imaginaries of her followers. The trauma she experienced as a Middle Passage survivor and a sex-slave may have prompted her possession experiences. She used the exorcism space to transform herself and her social condition. Rosa became more than an attraction: she offered a unifying service for herself and her community. The syncretic images, the voices, and the visions that flesh out Rosa's testimony support a reading according to which Rosa did not see herself as distinct from the divine but instead as part of the imagery of the divine's humanity; Rosa performed a mystical identity and she conflated food imagery with notions of the divine in order to suggest the redemptive and powerful feminine presence. Rosa used her body to perform a hybrid identity: she developed a unique syncretic cosmology where exorcism and spiritual revelation overlapped.

Rosa's testimony facilitates an interpretation in which she manipulated the trope of the female visionary mystic to her advantage. I suggest that, for Rosa, the identity of the visionary mystic served as a vehicle to access security, influence, and fame within her Rio de Janeiro Catholic community of São Sabastião. Rosa's mystical visions, which she described to her spiritual confessors, functioned on various levels. On one level, her visions worked as camouflage. Through her narrations of these visions, she manipulated her spiritual confessors. The images and voices that she described allowed her, through her spiritual confessors' support, to secure access to basic societal resources, such as food and shelter, as well as access to elite and commonly male-dominated resources such as

education. On another level, her visions offered her a way to covertly include Afro-religious ideology and imagery into overtly Catholic practice.

Rosa's testimonies reveal her narrations of mystical visions, which demonstrate a conflation of Catholic and African imagery and beliefs, as well as a negotiation between these cosmologies. Within her class-based, stratified society, Rosa's recounting of her mystical visions was her chosen method for the construction of her own identity and, consequently, her own fame. This chosen method for interaction and participation within her community was one way of intervening in her own historical trajectory. A reading of Rosa's words facilitates an interpretation in which she consciously constructs an identity as a mystic so as to exert control over conditions that otherwise she has no control over. Under the umbrella of the Brazilian baroque cultural paradigm, Rosa's performance of a unorthodox Afro-Christianity and the articulation and narration of covert heterodox voices transformed her suffering and enabled her to circumvent her ascribed status as a black female enslaved person. Rosa's religious performance fulfilled an important void in the socio-religious network of the early modern Ibero-Atlantic Carioca community and fostered a discourse about the female religious role as redeeming flesh.

Rosa's testimony illustrates her conflation between her own nourishing body and the nourishment of Christ's body during the Eucharistic ritual through her manipulation of sustenance imagery. In another way, her words offer an insight into her conflated understanding of Christ's suffering and her own suffering as a former slave and Middle Passage survivor. Rosa's visions indirectly detail how she was afflicted both physically and psychologically as part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, as I outlined in Chapter

one. As discussed above, we may interpret Rosa's visions as her own narrative, or as her own discourse.

[I]ndividuals are created through discourse, their identities and sense of individualism being the product of the discourses that ripple through society. This suggests that subject identities and categories that are used to describe body-subjects are not given, but are created through representations, practices and performances" (Hubbard 104).

Rosa may have seen her visions and her physical suffering as manifestations of the holy on her body. Moreover, perhaps Rosa understood these experiences, in part, in relationship to other Catholic mystics whose stories were circulated within baroque Ibero-American society and constituted a collective Catholic consciousness in the New World. "[T]he role of saints and their cults in the creation of collective identities. Stories of saintly figures and physical manifestations of the holy -- pictures, statues, contact relics, bodily remains . . . -- could serve as repositories of faith and memory for communities in the process of formation on American soil" (Greer and Bilinkoff xvii). New World representations of Catholic visions and physical manifestations build upon a tradition of female body imagery in the Catholic Church. I suggest that this imagery functioned to support Rosa's performance as a female mystic in colonial Brazil. Her performances as a possessed individual in the church spaces in Minas Gerais, and later her mystical visions and religious practices in the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora de Parto in Rio de Janeiro created Rosa's identity. In this way, it may have been that Rosa's followers came to perceive her as a surrogate for Christ.

Thus, we may interpret Rosa's actions as a response to the constraints of her society. She carefully negotiated between her various subject positions. Her syncretic religious practice reveals her new identity construction as a woman, as a slave, as an African and as a Christian and most importantly, as a survivor. Simultaneously, Rosa's visions function in seemingly opposite directions: Rosa transforms her pain and suffering as a subjected individual in her society to represent the early modern hegemonic standard of Christian suffering. Rosa comes to celebrate her identity as uniquely hers, but also as relatable to many others. This embodies the trauma and suffering of Christ, and through Roach's theoretical concept of *surrogation* and Schechner's concept of *transformation/transportation* performance, Rosa can be seen as a female form of Eucharistic Host, or the heavenly hostess.

Conclusion: Rosa's Transformation

By manipulating Catholic discourse and conflating African cosmology with Christian religious mysticism and revelation, Rosa transcended the New World female slave condition and constructed a feminine discourse through her narration of her visions. In the imaginaries of her followers, Rosa may have represented a form of Surrogate Host. Through her re-telling of trauma, she fused her suffering to the redemptive suffering of Christ. Thus, this connection functioned to create meaning for the daily survival of Rosa and her followers, much in the tradition of Rosa's African origins.

This chapter has explored Rosa's agency and her hybrid identity as an Afro-Catholic in eighteenth-century Brazil. It has highlighted the ways in which she intervened in her own historical trajectory, suggesting how she responded to conditions not of her own making, such as her social status as a slave, and how she negotiated a different and

atypical outcome from those of a similar social position. I have suggested that Rosa constructed her own fame as a popular saint through her performance as a visionary mystic. Rosa's visions facilitate a reading in which she manipulated the Catholic religious space to secure access to societal resources. This chapter has interpreted her visions to reveal an Afro-Catholic understanding of her ideology within her Brazilian baroque context. I use Roach's *Surrogation* in combination with Schechner's concept of *transformation/transportation* performance to argue that Rosa consciously constructed her own identity as a visionary mystic. This theoretical application reveals Rosa's agency: she performed her hybrid identity as an Afro-Catholic popular saint, which ultimately allowed her to transform her social status from slave to mystic.

The African slave girl Rosa Maria Egipcíaca was shipped to Rio de Janeiro at the age of six. Over the course of her thirty-eight years in Colonial Brazil, she reinvented how she saw herself and how others saw her by manipulating the trope of the female Catholic visionary mystic. Rosa reinvented, reiterated and reproduced devout Catholic practice to forge powerful alliances with influential members of Brazil's early modern social network. Many of her spiritual confessors as well as other wealthy and well-connected members of Brazil's early modern social network believed in Rosa's mystical abilities. These alliances facilitated her unparalleled access to resources within her society. Rosa received an education and a concrete space, *Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto*, to practice her own religious worship.

Her devout Catholic worship as a *beata* in the region of Minas Gerais and later in Rio de Janeiro was the backdrop for her performance as an Afro-Catholic. Overtly submitting to the Catholic paradigm, she appealed to the repertoire of previous Catholic

visionary mystics' practices and covertly incorporated Afro-religious, Brazilian-Yorùbá symbolism into her visions and possession experiences. Her Inquisitional testimonies uncover an Afro-Catholic voice: Rosa repeatedly embedded Afro-religious references within her descriptions of Catholic imagery in recounting her visions and possession experiences to her spiritual confessors and the Ecclesiastical Judge in Rio.

Rosa's religious practice may be read as distinctly Afro-Catholic. Her possession experiences with the *Zeladora dos Templos* may be understood as Brazilian Yorùbá religious practice of "mounting". Her visions infuse references to the *Orishás*, the Afro-religious Brazilian Yorùbá pantheon of ancestor-deities. Rosa developed a syncretic cosmology where possession experiences and spiritual revelations overlapped. Her possession performances and her visions worked to gain her local fame in the imaginaries of her of her followers. Known as Santa Rosa in her community of São Sebastião of Rio de Janeiro and Abelha Mestra to her *recolhidas* in the Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto, Rosa transcended the New World female slave condition. She actively intervened in her own social trajectory. She consciously performed the role of the Catholic visionary mystic and then infused her practice with covert Afro-religious concepts.

This chapter has offered an examination of the ways in which Rosa "writes/rights" her story with her own voice. Rosa's visions functioned in seemingly opposite directions: Rosa transformed her pain and suffering as a subjected individual in her society to represent the early modern hegemonic standard of Christian suffering and Rosa celebrated her identity as uniquely hers, but also as relatable to many others. This female discourse provides insight into the religious polemics of syncretization and multiple consciousnesses in colonial Brazil. Rosa's testimony illustrates the unique

composite of a syncretic Afro-Catholic baroque voice. Rosa's understanding of Catholic baroque rituals and their emphasis on the trope of spiritual sustenance, in juxtaposition to Rosa's nascent African belief systems can be understood as the impetus for Rosa's "mystical" visions and the construction of the voices she hears. Rosa developed a unique syncretic cosmology and she created a discourse of a reified female role in her baroque setting that counterpointed conventions of Catholic orthodoxy.

“Heresy presents the *doctrinal legibility of a social conflict* and the *binary form* of the modality by which a society defines itself, excluding that which it casts in the role of its other (a form from which *mystics* [as a field of knowledge during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] first received its binary structure, opposing an ‘interior’ to an ‘exterior’)” --- Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*

CONCLUSION: THE FLESH AND THE WORD -- Disparate Historical Trajectories of
Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s Extraordinary Mystic Experiences

Úrsula’s, Chicaba’s and Rosa’s words expose a compilation and careful construction of the various scripts and religious practices incorporated within the tradition of female mystical discourse. Their written texts and oral performances illustrate their individual *imitatio christi*. Their fusion to the body of Christ through shared imagery of suffering functions to transform their lived experiences as exploited slaves to ideal experiences as revered mystics. These Afro women’s texts generate a reading of transformation that depicts the reinvention of the subjected slave body to the influential mystic soul.

This praxis of transformation described throughout my dissertation illustrates how these Afro-Catholic women moved beyond their ascribed status as enslaved female to an

achieved status of venerable religious mystic. I read Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's descriptions as performance because within the space of their texts they reframe their slave experiences. Their words illustrate transportation from the realm of the real -- the lived experience -- to the realm of the imaginary -- the ideal experience. To rework Richard Schecher's words, they battle demons, trying to discern if their visions are of the Devil, they go into trances during exorcisms, and they travel to the sky, or to the mountains in their mystic visions (*Performance Theory* 126). However, in the end, when the writing process is through, they return to the reality of their exploited experience. In a socially stratified society, the writing space was the one space where these women religious writers were enabled to do things they could not ordinarily do. Through their performances (their respective writing processes) Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa brought about this transportation to the mystical realm by performing the transformation from subjected slave body to revered mystic soul.

Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's journeys were influenced by similar factors: their respective African parentage, West African origins and subsequent experiences of exploitation and suffering as enslaved women, their respective Catholic religious education in a baroque Ibero-Atlantic context, and their respective mystical visionary experiences. Each of these Afro women engendered local fame associated with her respective visionary practices. These Afro women reframed their respective stories. They constructed their own narratives, using their own words and knowledges. As I have argued, Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa reinvented the repertoire of female sanctity and rearticulated the trope of the female visionary mystic to develop a unique Afro-Catholic identity and discourse about the role of female flesh, physical labor and slave suffering

linked to the image of Christ's suffering so as to reframe the perception of their status as female slave subject to influential mystic agent. However, while these Afro-women's stories are seemingly very similar, their conclusions are quite disparate. While Úrsula and Chicaba were revered and recognized by the Catholic authority as exemplary religious women, who placed their stories and their knowledge within the interior of the Catholic discursive field, Rosa was accused of heresy and false sainthood, which placed her experiences and words outside this field. This exclusion sets Rosa apart. As Michel de Certeau emphasizes in his quote above, this heresy locates the individual, in this case Rosa, within the binary form that classifies her as other and permits us to read the social conflict associated with her social exclusion.

In my introduction, I suggested that the marginalization of these women's knowledge, and more specifically, their need to camouflage their Afro-religious discourse could be understood as markers of epistemic violence. With this statement, I position my argument alongside "the clearest available example of epistemic violence . . . the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" (Spivak 24). However, it is these Afro women's marginal position and their descriptions of their mystical practices that excludes them from identification with the colonial Subject per se and casts them in the role of Other. Here, in my conclusion, I return to this concept of epistemic violence and suggest that we may read the disparate historical trajectories of Úrsula, Chicaba, and Rosa as examples of the social conflict and, in some sense, a gauge for rethinking the Ibero-Atlantic early modern society. Furthermore, Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's narratives and their lived conclusions

illustrate the limits of their historical trajectories, which seem to have been fettered to their perceived inclusion or exclusion, within their societies.

Returning to Gaytri Spivak's foundational article, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, we see that she acknowledges that this project -- to conjure the colonial Other -- "is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of the Other in its precarious Subjectivity" (25). Spivak cites Michel Foucault to explain that epistemic violence is part of an eighteenth century European project to redefine sanity. However, then she questions this project and asks,

But what if that particular redefinition was only a part of the narrative history in Europe as well as in the colonies? What if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine? Perhaps it is no more than to ask that the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism be recognized as 'subjugated knowledge,' 'a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity' (Spivak citing Foucault 25).

This is where I locate these Afro-women's words. Their texts elaborate distinct discourses that may be understood as overtly Catholic and participate in the "subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism". Thus, their descriptions of their slave and mystic experiences form part of a compendium of subjugated knowledges, disqualified as inadequate. As Michel de Certeau outlines in his work, *The Mystic Fable*, the term *mystics* should be understood as a short-lived discipline or field of knowledge that

quickly passed from being an established practice of a way of knowing the limits of the spoken word in its divine manifestations to becoming “displaced toward the area of ‘fable’” (13). As de Certeau explains, “[e]verywhere [mystics and spirituals] insinuate an ‘extraordinary’: they are voices quoted -- voices grown more and more separate from the field of meaning that writing had conquered, ever closer to the song or the cry. [. . .] So it is that the passing figure of *mystics* continues to ask us what remains of the spoken word” (13).

This dissertation has tackled the question: what remains of the spoken word for Úrsula, Chicaba and Rosa? As Afro-women their bodies of knowledge and the knowledge from their embodied experiences as slaves and mystics fostered a new identity construction in the Ibero-Atlantic as Afro Catholics. For Úrsula, her Afro-Catholic identity became revered behind the walls of the Santa Clara Convent in Lima, Peru. Overtly, her lived experiences as a slave and then as a mystic and healer within the convent fit well within the parameters of the Catholic Spanish imperial project in the New World. Although excluded based on her lineage and her class, she was included because of her religious practice and specifically, the way in which her mystic experiences conformed to the trope of the female visionary mystic. A further examination of Úrsula’s life may include a close reading of her official *vida* and an attempt to reconstruct the circles of knowledges of mystic women in colonial Peru, including, but not limited to her connection to the mystic and religious practice of Luisa Melgarejo.

Chicaba also was excluded from full membership in the class of early modern religious women. She served within a noble household in Madrid, Spain, as a slave and

then served as a religious tertiary in La Penitencia, Salamanca, Spain. Chicaba's life was limited to a confined, domestic and religious space. Like Úrsula, she constructed her local fame through the connections and relationships she made with individuals within these spaces and specifically, for Chicaba, her intimate relationship as personal confidant to the Marquesa Teresa Juliana de Portocarrero y Meneses. However, shortly after Chicaba's death, the Catholic Church appropriated her story, and in particular, her captivity narrative. Her story was filtered and framed to illustrate the power of the Catholic imperial project in Spain and in Africa. Chicaba was revered posthumously because her story reinforced Catholic hegemonic practice and participation in the slave trade. Chicaba's experiences and knowledges were reworked by her spiritual confessor to tell his version of her story. However, as I argued in my chapter, Chicaba may have found ways to subtly and indirectly hide her own story within his narrative.

There may be another document that further fleshes out Chicaba's narrative. Chicaba's owner, the Marquesa of Mancera, wrote her own spiritual memoir. Archived in the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Madrid, is the record of sale for this memoir by the Conde de Gondomar. There are numerous unidentified personal manuscripts and religious memoirs housed in the Conde de Gondomar's personal library, which is now part of the Real Biblioteca. Perhaps the Marquesa's spiritual memoir is among them in which it discusses her personal relationship with Chicaba.

The outlier for this investigation is Rosa. Her story and her lived experiences were not contained within the walls of a convent or the household of a Spanish noble. In fact, she had to work her own connections to construct her own wall in the form of the

Recolhimento de Nossa Senhor do Parto. Her practices were far from orthodox and her many encounters with the operatives of the Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil were too scandalous to not cause social conflict on many levels. Although many of her practices may not have been as radically different from those of Úrsula and Chicaba, what was significantly disparate were the places in which she practiced, the individuals she involved, and her movement and visibility within her religious community.

Rosa's relationship and connections to wealthy members of colonial Brazil's emerging merchant class protected her up to a certain point. However, the social tension and religious scandal forced Rosa's followers to break their ties with her so as to protect their own interests, as evidence by Maria Theresa de Jesus Arvelos letters, which she willingly turned over to the Ecclesiastical authorities. However, presumably she only turned over some of the letters that Rosa had sent her in their decade long correspondence. Like Maria Theresa, there were many people who were closely connected to Rosa that most assuredly felt conflicted about their relationship to her once the authorities of the Inquisition had begun to interrogate various community members.

It may be that much of her manuscript was not burned but was purchased and hidden by one of her most powerful supporters, the wealthiest man in Minas Gerais, Coronel João Gonçalves Fraga. It is documented that at the end of his life, he used the majority of his fortune to purchase "spiritual writings" and fund well above the average number of masses to be said in his honor upon his death, a common practice for the religious devout and the financially robust of Catholic Brazil. His will is archived in the Casa Setecentista de Mariana in Minas Gerais, Brazil. An analysis of this will alongside Rosa's letters and the testimonies of the witnesses of her heterodox religious practice

may reveal another level of intertextual religious references that demonstrate the degree of Rosa's access to formal religious education. This may bring new insight to the level of education women had within the lay religious social network of colonial Brazil. This documentation along with a close reading of Rosa's correspondence with her emancipators, Pedro Rodrigues Arvelos and his wife Maria Teresa de Jesus, will be the primary sources for a more indepth analysis of Rosa's lived experiences and her millenarian movement in eighteenth century, Brazil.

The disparate trajectories of Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's lived experiences can be explained in part by their level of visibility and movement, or lack thereof, within their respective communities. Moreover, each of these women had powerful supporters and benefactors protecting them throughout much of their lives. However, in the end, I believe we can read Rosa as the outlier, the other and the heretic because she had gained a higher level of autonomy in comparison to both Úrsula and Chicaba. Her multiple encounters with representatives and persons aligned with the orthodox Catholic project in Brazil may have generated a severe cognitive dissonance for Rosa when observing the heterodox and culturally diverse reality of the Brazilian cultural milieu in the late eighteenth century. Portuguese-American religious education was far from standardized and uniform. The practices of numerous lay religious clergy as well as the official Catholic religious practice operated alongside many recognized religious Catholic brotherhoods. The fact that there were not many officially recognized convents or places for female religious protection and education may have also played a significant role in Rosa's movement and active role in constructing a following and support system so as to create this space for her own religious education. This is a distinct contrast to Spanish

and Spanish American Catholic religious education. It was this disparate experience within their respective systems of religious education that impacted the end of their lives and the beginning of their legacies.

Úrsula's, Chicaba's and Rosa's enslavement experiences allow modern day readers to connect the lives of these Afro-women to a broader understanding of the slave experience in the early modern Circum-Atlantic world. These women describe their role as passive recipients and victims of the Ibero-Atlantic slave trade in an active way. They use the trope of Christ's submissive character to highlight their supreme power as religious agents in their own identity construction. These Afro women's words allow modern readers to see these women's active participation in a system that was not of their making but that yielded to their manipulation, opening a space for them to become more than what their fleshly existence could offer. They became famous, Afro-Catholic mystics whose words generated a meaningful discourse about the role of Afro-women within the Catholic religious space that extends beyond their own time.

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