



# From Hell to Hell: Central Africans and Catholic Visual Catechesis in the Early Modern Atlantic Slave Trade

Larissa Brewer-García and Cécile Fromont

In seventeenth-century Cartagena de Indias, a Caribbean port city in today's Colombia, enslaved Africans who emerged from the holds of slave ships after their forced travel from the coast of Africa faced a multisensory Catholic catechesis designed by Jesuit missionaries. Seated in a courtyard or large room in one of the houses where they were temporarily imprisoned before being resold, the newly arrived captives received catechism relayed by African translators enslaved at the service of the city's Jesuit College. The interpreter-catechists, who had themselves once lived through the same ordeal, explained the key tenets of the Christian faith in languages intelligible to the group before them, displaying paintings and prints to support their pedagogical goals. Descriptions and depictions of hell, the place where the souls of the unredeemed suffer eternal torments, loomed large in the words and images with which the interpreter-catechists attempted to make the notion of Christian salvation meaningful to the newly arrived captives.

The specific paintings and prints the interpreters used in those catechisms are no longer extant or, less likely, have not yet been located. However, they are known to historians thanks to lengthy descriptions that appear in hagiographic writings composed to document the missionary labour of future saint Pedro Claver. Father Pedro Claver was a Catalan Jesuit priest who sailed as a novice to Cartagena in the second decade of the seventeenth century. He travelled soon after to the highland Andean city of Santa Fe de Bogotá to complete his studies and then returned to Cartagena to begin his more than thirty-year apostolate among the enslaved men and women living in or transiting through the Caribbean port. Four years after his death in 1654, a formal inquest began collecting testimonies of his faith and deeds from those who knew him in order to initiate a beatification case. Three enslaved interpreter-catechists from western regions of central Africa, in and around Kongo and Angola, who worked closely with him, Andres Sacabuche, Ignacio Angola, and José Monzolo, provided some of the most detailed testimonies of Claver's mission to evangelise Africans in and around the city.<sup>1</sup>

Anthologised excerpts from an Italian manuscript translation of the inquest appeared in print in Rome in 1696 as part of an effort to publicise Claver's potential sanctity. These excerpts became better known to scholars thanks to Tulio Aristizábal and Anna Maria Splendiani's translation of this volume into Spanish in 2002.<sup>2</sup> Much less known is that complete versions of the testimonies of the inquest also survive. Larissa Brewer-García contributed a book-length study of the full Italian manuscript of the inquest in 2020 and then located the original Spanish record in 2022.<sup>3</sup> This latter document brings us closer than ever to the words that the three central African men

**Detail from Jean-René Lhermitte (attrib.), *View of Cap Français and of the ship Marie-Séraphique, capitaine Gaugy, on the day of the beginning of sales, third trip to Angola, 1772–73* (plate 7).**

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spoke to the Church's inquisitors in seventeenth-century Cartagena. Still, the sentences recorded in ink on paper by the Spanish notary constitute a complex, heteroglossic text, and an ambiguous historical document. On the one hand, it offers an almost unparalleled opportunity to probe the experience of enslavement and concomitant evangelisation from the perspective of the enslaved. Very few such documents exist, especially before the late eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the reports are heavily mediated texts, elaborated in conditions characterised by stark asymmetries of power between interviewer and interviewees. Far from intending to collect details about the lives and views of the African witnesses, the purpose of the interrogation was to mount a case for the beatification of a European religious hero to be reviewed by the Papacy's Sacred Congregation of Rites. If successful, the bid would be resounding evidence of the success of the Spanish colonial project and the Roman Catholic spiritual infrastructure.

Even if they only distantly and fragmentarily register discourse produced by enslaved Africans in Cartagena de Indias, the testimonies remain rare, vivid, and thus immensely valuable registers of African perspectives about the slave trade. This essay centres on these imperfect yet vital documents and the insight they hold about the visual and spiritual embodied experience of enslavement and deportation through the Middle Passage. It takes an approach that amplifies the eloquent, piercing insights originating from the African captives themselves while maintaining rigorous attention to the limiting historical, political, and rhetorical circumstances of their appearance in the inquest. Our argument mobilises visual and textual analyses as well as linguistic considerations in a study guided by a central axis: the multivalent visual, rhetorical, and spiritual intersections between the imagery and concept of the Christian hell and the conditions of the Middle Passage.

The comparison between hell and the Middle Passage was a prominent feature in the Jesuit catechism for enslaved Africans in Cartagena. It also participated in and contributed to a broad network of words, ideas, beliefs, and images that circulated in and shaped central Africa as well as the broader early modern Atlantic world in the wake of the boom in the transatlantic slave trade. The missionaries used the parallel as a fulcrum for conversion, cruelly inviting enslaved men and women to reckon with and make intelligible the radically violent experience of the Middle Passage through the lens of the Christian inferno. Central African captives reacted to the comparison, drawing from an array of linguistic, visual, and spiritual references arching back to their various experiences living in or transiting through the partly Christian and increasingly worldly environment of Kongo and Angola. Artworks created on the African Atlantic coast and destined to be sold or gifted in transoceanic networks of commerce and political patronage gave further visual and narrative form to rumours and facts about the Middle Passage as a simile for the mouth of hell and its predatory consumption of African bodies and souls.

In analysing the Jesuit-designed catechesis and the response of central Africans to its contents within their vast Atlantic linguistic, spiritual, and visual contexts, this essay brings new insights to the study of the transatlantic slave trade. It sketches a documented, historically situated, and culturally elucidated outline of the affective response of enslaved men and women to their captivity and displacement as subjects in history, viewers of works of art, and actors in the dramatic events of enslavement.

This is not an easy task. Our argument relies on images that are no longer extant and texts whose narrative voices are at best filtered and fragmented. Against these adverse documentary conditions, we unroll a strategically oblique approach moving past and against the biases, silences, and limitations of the archives of the slave trade, of Catholic missions, and of colonialism. We locate our missing or imperfect

documents within a broader evidentiary corpus transversal to the logic and systems of the Iberian colonial project, the Roman Church's proselytism, and the slave trade. Specifically, we construct a dialogue between Sacabuche's, Angola's, and Monzolo's descriptions of the formal qualities of the images of hell and their reception among fellow central Africans and two additional bodies of evidence. The first of these corpuses consists of surviving artworks similar to those the catechists once used that complement and expand the evocative ekphrases of the written record. By examining images related, if not identical, to the ones described in the testimonies which no longer exist, we 'work around [...] missing artifact[s]' and turn to the necessary 'improvisation of new historical methods'.<sup>5</sup> In this we draw inspiration, as does Esther Chadwick in this volume, from Linda M. Rodriguez's and Ada Ferrer's powerful scholarship on the late eighteenth-century Cuban leader of African descent José Antonio Aponte and his famously missing book of images.<sup>6</sup>

The second body of additional evidence we mobilise comprises written missionary documents composed on both sides of the Atlantic to support the evangelisation of Africans. They include translations of Christian texts into central African languages and lexica that index conceptions and willing or accidental misconceptions of Christian concepts that developed in central Africa in the era of the slave trade. They also include harrowing missionary descriptions of the conditions of the Middle Passage.

These two sets of documents – the contemporary images and missionary texts – provide us with expanded horizons for examining the central African interpreters' catechesis about hell to other survivors of the Middle Passage. Bringing these sources into conversation allows us to outline the visual, spiritual, and intellectual contours of the worldviews that the ebbs and flows of the Atlantic slave trade created and that shaped the lived experience of both catechists and catechumens who met in the ship holds and barracoons of Cartagena.

Our approach complements the quantitative analyses of the transatlantic slave trade. Numerical studies have been crucial in advancing historical, social, and economic knowledge of this phenomenon and the long shadow it cast over later centuries. Yet, this quantitative scholarship has not been in a position to counter the 'violence of abstraction', a process central to the Middle Passage machinery that transformed men, women, and children into commodities.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the sources and analyses of these studies are anchored in and driven by the ledgers, transaction records, and accounting that enacted that violence and as such risk perpetuating it.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have long – and increasingly since the turn of the second millennium – attempted to supplement this quantitative mode of approaching the slave trade. They have for instance turned their attention to the discursive traces and fragments of visual and material culture that bring into focus the lives, deeds, and perspectives of enslaved individuals.<sup>9</sup> This essay joins this line of scholarship, analysing the idea, imagery, and sensory lexicon of hell as a means to access otherwise elusive dimensions of how the enslaved themselves interpreted the slave trade and the Middle Passage.

Like many scholars of the slave trade before us, we unfold our argument with a keen awareness of the violence inherent to our sources and the risks our analysis holds to extend this violence into the present. We meet this possibility with a counteracting determination to demonstrate that scholarly work can and indeed must address that violence in order to redirect its testimonial power from serving as an instrument of colonial oppression, white supremacy, and, in our case, forced catechisation, to bearing witness to the physical, spiritual, and sensory experience

of the enslaved. The conjunction of our expertise as historians of art and literature is a powerful lever in this arduous undertaking. Our paired perspectives and skills give contours to the experience of the victims of the slave trade as still largely unnamed, but specifically identified actors in the making of the vast early modern Atlantic world.

### Hell as a Pedagogy

Accounts of the Jesuit catechisation process in Cartagena describe how missionaries and interpreters used aspects of the experience of the Middle Passage as a fulcrum for their proselytism. The Jesuits and their interpreters brought fresh water, familiar foods, soothing smells, and healing balms to the newly arrived captives which they explicitly presented as antidotes for the physical deprivations of the transatlantic journey in the hold of an overcrowded slave ship. These items presented the missionaries and their catechesis as a respite from the ordeals of enslavement. Angolan interpreter Andrés Sacabuche remembered his own experience as a captive of these early encounters with the clerics and these offerings they called ‘gifts’. Claver and his interpreters, he explains, ‘divided [the gifts] among [the new arrivals]’ in order to ‘treat them with kindness and attract them easily to be instructed and baptised’.<sup>10</sup> A Jesuit treatise on African evangelisation, composed by Claver’s mentor in Cartagena, encourages missionaries (through their interpreters) to explain Christian baptism as quenching the thirst of the soul and Christian heaven as a place where the enslaved would be free from death, illness, and captivity.<sup>11</sup> With these similes, the missionaries used the physical succour they provided as a reference point to make Christian conversion meaningful.

But the Jesuits’ apostolic zeal not only operated according to a positive logic of inducement. Claver and his interpreters also confronted new arrivals with language and sensory experiences that instrumentalised in a threatening way the traumas of enslavement and the Middle Passage – which the interpreters had undergone, and whose final results Claver had witnessed boarding the ships upon their arrival in the Caribbean harbour. This was especially the case in the prominent use they made in their catechesis of verbal and visual images of hell. The interpreters’ testimonies about the evangelical process in Cartagena reveal that being spared from hell was one of the first and most prominent benefits of becoming Christian that were announced to African catechumens in Cartagena. A painted image of hell held a prominent place in the communication of this message. Early in the catechism, Claver and the interpreters walked among the newly arrived captives showing the depiction of the Christian inferno to each catechumen ‘individually’ while explaining its significance with grave affect ‘so that they would better learn from its sour severity’.<sup>12</sup> To put it plainly, Claver and his interpreters used the painting to terrorise the catechumens with the threat of eternal damnation. The parallels between the painted hell and the conditions of the slave ship holds and barracoons, we shall see below, intentionally heightened the impact of the lesson.

The strategy of enticing conversion and strengthening belief by confronting viewers with images of the unending suffering of the faithless, idolaters, and heretics after their death was hardly new when the Jesuits began their apostolate among the men and women disembarking from slave ships in Cartagena in 1605. Colleagues of Claver in Cuzco, for instance, rejoiced at the progress they made in their evangelising thanks to the vivid images of heaven, hell, and the Last Judgement they brought to Indigenous Andean populations’ eyes.<sup>13</sup> ‘There have been remarkable changes and conversions among the Indians’, reported Jesuit Antonio de la Vega in 1600:

on account of the [images of the] Judgment, and [heaven's] Glory and the pains suffered by the condemned, all of which are painted on the walls of this church and chapel [the Capilla de Indios next to the Compañía de Jesús church in Cuzco], and particularly the sorrows and punishments in hell caused by the Indians' vices and sins, which are all well drawn there; everything is clearly depicted by its types [of punishment] and [in its] details because the Indians are better persuaded by paintings, much more than by many sermons.<sup>14</sup>

Vega's evocation of the standard trope that images can be more affecting than spoken – or written – words, which has its origins in Gregory the Great's defence of images as the Bible for the laity, shows its previous application in missionary settings in Spanish America, bolstered by the directives of the Council of Trent.

A mural, titled *The Path to Heaven and Hell*, created around the 1620s in the Andean parish church of San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, similarly confronted the Indigenous population under Spanish colonial rule with a vivid depiction of hell (plate 1). Across the back of the church, a luminous scene lays out the viewer's choice. The option to the right of the doorway shows the golden path to heaven. On this road saved souls receive angelic accompaniment as they advance toward an ornately decorated multi-storied palace. Figures in the upper level of the building, presumably saints or other exemplary Christians, lightly tug at the larger of the saved souls' eyes and mouth to keep him on track. It is modest help in comparison to the pull of a demon, clenching a rope tied to the same protagonist's back from the opposite side of the door. That sinister side, to the left of the doorway, shows the red road to hell. Souls who have turned away from salvation are flanked by monstrous demons ushering them towards the gates of a blazing fortress. The large jaws of a dragon-like beast gape immediately to the side of the open threshold. By fangs or by fire, the soul of the damned will be devoured and consumed.<sup>15</sup>

The visual programme of the Andahuaylillas painting of hell – which features fire, beastly consumption, and forms of restraint – shares many similarities with

**1 Entrance, Church of Saint Peter of Andahuaylillas, Peru, 1620s. Photo: Raúl Montero Quispe, MAVCOR.**





images and notions of hell meaningful to other recently arrived central Africans. The semantic and cultural connotations of the words they used to gloss the painted images of the Christian hell, and the meanings catechumens could attach to those terms, are of crucial import for our art-historical analysis of this missionary visual encounter. Linguistic considerations thus underlie the visual analysis we perform of no longer extant paintings through their ekphrases.

### Hell in Translation

European missionaries considered images such as the ones used in Cartagena or the Andean tableaux of the afterlife in Andahuaylillas and Quito particularly powerful because of their perceived potential to bypass some of the challenges of translating doctrinal concepts into languages of the neophytes. While reliance on evangelical interpreters was justified through the precedent of the Apostles after the Pentecost, it also risked introducing errors in the retelling of the priest's speech, either inadvertently or on purpose.<sup>17</sup> Of special concern was the translation of concepts pertaining to the articles of the faith. The theologically precise definitions of these supernatural truths tested the limitations of linguistic translation either for lack of a cognate from one language to the next, or else when using a perilously close simile opened the door to heretical or idolatrous misunderstanding.<sup>18</sup>

In Iberian America, African interpreters carried out most evangelical translation in African languages orally. Only a small number of European clerics acquired some familiarity with terms in commonly spoken African languages to assist their communication with the enslaved.<sup>19</sup> Doctrinal texts printed for African evangelisation in the Atlantic world in the seventeenth century evidence the kind of translation work African interpreters performed to help European missionaries on both sides of the Atlantic. The surviving examples of these publications provide glimpses into the challenges African interpreters and missionaries faced in communicating Christian concepts in translation and the solutions they devised for such purposes. They also suggest some of the language and the field of lexical as well as semantic references that central African catechists would have used in Cartagena to describe the content and import of the images of hell they showed newly arrived catechumens.

An important example of this genre of missionary text is the fourteen-page Kimbundu-Spanish bilingual collection of prayers 'for the Angolas who live [in Peru]'. The Jesuit order printed this pamphlet in Lima in 1629 under the title *Oraciones traducidas en la lengua del Reyno de Angola*.<sup>20</sup> The term provided for hell in the Kimbundu translation of the Creed is 'inferno', spelled as it would be in Portuguese. This translation for hell, which the text's production history helps explain, illustrates the multiple limitations catechisers faced in introducing the concept and communicating its significance to central Africans.

The translations from this short Kimbundu-Spanish collection of prayers derived from an earlier and much longer Kikongo-Portuguese Christian doctrine edited by Jesuit Mateo Cardoso and printed in Lisbon in 1624.<sup>21</sup> According to the postscript of the Limeñan prayer pamphlet, Jesuits in Lisbon had sent the earlier Kikongo doctrine to their colleagues in Buenos Aires, in today's Argentina, for use in their apostolate among central Africans in the region. By the third decade of the seventeenth century, increasingly large numbers of enslaved labourers arrived in the mouth of the La Plata River, the enormous estuary of the Uruguay and Paraná rivers that separates today's Argentina to the south and Uruguay to the north. Some enslaved Africans would stay to meet growing local demand in the coastal Spanish and Portuguese settlements

of the region while others were destined to further journeys to the highland mines of the Andes or to the agricultural regions of Paraguay and Tucumán in what is now northern Argentina and Paraguay. Close ties between Buenos Aires and central Africa developed that facilitated the trade in slaves between the two shores.<sup>22</sup> It is in this context that an unnamed central African interpreter or group of interpreters working for the Jesuits in the region of La Plata translated the Kikongo prayers from Cardoso's doctrine into Kimbundu.<sup>23</sup> Kimbundu and Kikongo are two related Bantu languages spoken in west central Africa. Many people in west central Africa would have had fluent knowledge of both languages through their involvement in commercial ventures, or because of their political or administrative role in one of the region's polities.<sup>24</sup>

The Portuguese orthography for the term for hell in the Kimbundu text suggests that the Portuguese term 'inferno' functioned as a full-fledged loan word in Kimbundu, a tongue spoken in Angola with connections to Portuguese due to the Iberian presence and partial control over the region since the sixteenth century. In contrast, the original Kikongo text Cardoso compiled in the Kongo Kingdom and printed in Lisbon in 1624 actually varies between using the Kikongo term 'bulungui' for hell and importing the Portuguese term 'infernos' into the catechetical dialogue.<sup>25</sup> The Kikongo doctrine uses the term 'bulungui' eight of the ten times 'inferno' appears in the Portuguese text.<sup>26</sup> While Cardoso's comments on translation do not mention his reasons for importing the Portuguese term into Kikongo on the two occasions that it does appear, the identical singular and plural forms of the word in the Bantu language likely prompted the decision. The c. 1650 Kikongo-Latin-Spanish dictionary translates the Latin 'infernus' as 'búlungui' and notes that singular and plural forms of the word are identical.<sup>27</sup> This lack of distinction is significant because the plural 'infernos' in the Portuguese version of the Creed plays an important role in Cardoso's catechism, where it serves as a segue in the doctrine into an explanation of the four different spaces that comprise hell: 'Como dizeis infernos? Ha mais que hum? Vêbi bobelebo infernos? Baicâla yâca canti imôci?' [Why do you say hells? Are there more than one?]<sup>28</sup> The question incites the catechumen to learn the subdivisions between hell, purgatory, limbo for unbaptised children, and limbo for the patriarchs whom Jesus transported to heaven after his crucifixion.<sup>29</sup> In using the Portuguese term in the plural in this part of the doctrine, Cardoso avoided theological imprecision and supported the pedagogical goals of the text.<sup>30</sup>

The variable translations for the concept of hell in Cardoso's doctrine also reflected a broader diglossia in Kongo society and its more than century-old Catholic Church. Kikongo and Portuguese had been spoken alongside each other in the kingdom since the early sixteenth century as evidenced in individual naming patterns, political titles, the translation of prayers, and the languages of instruction used in elite or more modest education.<sup>31</sup> Translations of theological terms had been assiduous and ongoing in the Christian kingdom since the sixteenth century, and it is not surprising that Kikongo had a naturalised term for hell by the early seventeenth century, or that it could be used in conjunction with a Portuguese word. As a point of comparison, the late eighteenth-century dictionary of the Kikongo dialect spoken north of the Congo River, that is, outside of the Kongo Kingdom's direct realm of influence, does not include a translation for hell, but a long paraphrase glossing the French term as 'a great fire to punish the malicious'.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the Kikongo spoken in the Kongo Kingdom, the Kimbundu spoken in Angola may not have had an accepted Bantu-derived cognate for hell, as Kimbundu

speakers' relationship with Catholicism was more recent and fraught.<sup>33</sup> And indeed, the 1642 Kimbundu catechism that Italian Jesuit Francisco Pacconio assembled for use in Angola and Brazil a little more than a decade after the 1629 Lima pamphlet also uses the term 'inferno'.<sup>34</sup> According to John Thornton, the 1642 volume likely emerged from the work of Dionísio de Faria Barreto, an Angolan priest known for his fine linguistic abilities.<sup>35</sup> Pacconio edited Faria Barreto's early version, and Kongo-born, Coimbra-educated Jesuit António do Couto finished the work.<sup>36</sup> The adoption of the Portuguese loan word for hell in Kimbundu-language Christian texts in both the 1629 and 1642 publications therefore likely reflected a choice developed and sustained in dialogue with the Jesuits on both sides of the Atlantic in the seventeenth century. Friar Bernardo Maria de Cannecattim's Kimbundu dictionary published in 1804 still translates the Portuguese 'inferno' as 'infernó' with a tonic accent derived from Portuguese, in approximation to the Bantu tonal variations that the friar does not address. The term thus appears fully naturalised more than a century later and features in the dictionary with a long paraphrase about its meaning, which links it to 'dwelling with spirits of the land'.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, Kikongo catechisms composed in the Kongo Kingdom employ 'bulunqui' throughout the early modern period, other than in Cardoso's translation of the Creed.

Evoking and translating the notion of hell in central Africa posed not only thorny semantic issues. In Kimbundu- and Kikongo-speaking areas alike, the notion of an afterlife, let alone of hell in the Christian sense, did not resonate with local worldviews that Catholic missionaries observed in the early modern period. Jesuit Father Francisco Pacconio lamented in a report from 1627 that the people of the largely unconverted Angolan kingdom of Ndongo, when taught about 'hell, and beatitude, for those good and evil, [...] said that they wanted to send someone there to confirm that fact'.<sup>38</sup> It is unclear whether this quoted speech expresses the Angolans' sincerity or sarcasm. Even in the Christian Kongo, Capuchin Serafino da Cortona, active in the 1650s, found that 'it is a universal error among these people to think that there is no other life than this one; and thus they say that what we preach about death, Judgement, Hell and Heaven is a lie, and [ask] how a person, once dead, can get to Heaven [Cielo] or to Hell?'<sup>39</sup> In the 1690s, his brother in religion Marcellino d'Atri still lamented that the people of the Kongo 'routinely denied' the resurrection of the flesh at the end of times, 'saying that we [humans] die as any other animal not endowed with reason, not admitting the immortality of the soul'. This stand, however, was not a universally held opinion. Friar Marcellino immediately adds that 'others [in the Kongo] say people go on to live in another life much more pleasant than the present one'.<sup>40</sup> A century before, Jesuit missionaries had made a similar observation that 'among the errors that the devil has inculcated in the souls of these people is that they are immortal [...] and when someone dies, they say that they have been transported [translatos] elsewhere'.<sup>41</sup>

None of these anecdotes suggest that the priests knew or wanted to share with readers their knowledge of coherent central African ideas about what happens to souls of the dead.<sup>42</sup> Rather than register beliefs such as the transformation of the soul into an ancestor or a spirit connected to the land, both stories highlight the central Africans' scepticism with regard to the nature of the Christian afterlife. They also underline how, central African sarcasm aside, the Africans' objections demanded further elaboration on the part of the missionaries and further signs, or revelations, on the part of the Christian otherworld.<sup>43</sup> For such signs, missionaries and their flock were at the mercy of divine providence. But for empirical and logical explanations, European paintings of the Last Judgement could offer matter-of-fact representations

of the mechanics of eschatological times. Scenes of hell, purgatory, and heaven represented them as spaces that, for all their otherworldliness, were still readable from the perspective of human sensory experience.

### Graphic Violence

In his testimony about Claver's labours in Cartagena, Angolan interpreter Andrés Sacabuche describes a painting on canvas of a soul burning in hell, surrounded by demons, which Claver employed to teach new central African arrivals about the concept of the immortal soul:

He would teach them the immortality of souls, and how there was a hell for the bad and a heaven for the good, and that without being Christians they would not be able to save themselves and go to heaven but rather to hell where there was fire. He would show an image on cloth [lienzo] in which hell was depicted, and a soul who was suffering in it who was extremely ugly and repugnant, surrounded by demons who ferociously tormented it in those hellish punishments it endured.<sup>44</sup>

The corporal senses invoked in the description of the painting stress hell's connection to extreme heat, physical restriction, abject embodiment, the crowding of physical space, and the pains induced by instruments of physical torture. The tableau in La Compañía church in Quito gives vibrant visual contours to Sacabuche's ekphrasis of Claver's more modestly sized painting<sup>45</sup> (see plate 2). Both paintings display the bodies of anthropomorphic damned souls deformed by torture inflicted by ferocious demons and the heat of the red flames of hell.

Such a graphic depiction of hell and its moral valence as a place for the bad not only functioned to convey the abstract concept of the space of the Christian afterlife, but also to render the idea of eternal punishment as a vivid threat for the viewers of the image. José Monzolo, another central African interpreter who testified in Claver's beatification case in 1659, describes how visual depictions taught new arrivals to fear the idea of hell. The Jesuit, he recalls, 'would show hell depicted on a canvas with its flames and with the condemned so that they would abhor it'.<sup>46</sup> The verb 'aborrecer' denotes a particularly visceral corporal rejection. Sebastián de Covarrubias's definition of the verb from 1611 foregrounds the affecting imagery of a female pigeon's abandonment of its own eggs from her nest after a person has touched them.<sup>47</sup> The use of the same verb to describe the intended lesson of the image indicates that the Jesuits' African interpreters understood that their task was to inculcate in the viewers an instinctual, visceral repugnance of hell that would motivate the catechumens to change their behaviour and beliefs in the present.

In case the captive catechumens had any doubt about the relevance of the abstract lesson in relation to their own lives and experiences, Sacabuche explains that Claver, through his interpreters, explicitly drew the connection to the African new arrivals' enslavement and displacement across the Atlantic. Referring to the painting, Claver explained through the interpreters:

that in that way the souls of their black companions who died in their lands without the holy baptism were suffering. And that they should give many thanks to God for having brought them to the lands of Christians where they can also be Christians, receiving the holy baptism and freeing themselves from such suffering.<sup>48</sup>

This gloss of the image of hell, notably presenting the Middle Passage as a positive step towards spiritual if not physical liberation, encouraged African onlookers to make identifications between the image portrayed, the concepts orally conveyed, and their own past, present, and future. A prominent formal feature in South American paintings of hell and purgatory contributed to this effect. The representations often featured unrelenting stares from the suffering souls directed towards viewers. This exchange of gaze drew a chillingly vivid, intimate connection between the catechumens and the damned souls.

Monzolo further elaborates on the catechumen's rejection of hell by contrasting it to their reaction to another image, representing heaven, in which souls 'appeared with great happiness [*mucha alegría*]' . Upon being shown both images, Monzolo explains that the catechumens 'would say that they wanted that place in heaven, expressing great happiness with it [*alegrandose mucho con él*]. And they would spit and turn their face away when they would see [the image of] hell, signifying their disgust [*en señal de su aborrecimiento*]' .<sup>49</sup> Reading this testimony within the context of the pedagogical strategies employed by the Jesuits across their Spanish American missions demands pondering whether the interpreters in their explanations of the images told new arrivals how they should behave in front of them to denote their rejection of one and acceptance of the other.<sup>50</sup> But an array of evidence indicates that the reception of the images by the recently enslaved was not merely a learned response or a fanciful projection of the reaction the priests and catechists desired from them.

The gestures of rejection in front of the paintings of hell, for instance, echo culturally meaningful central African bodily attitudes well documented in later periods. Scholars of twentieth-century central Africa and its diasporas in the Americas have described at length the significance of turning one's head to the side as a sign of denial and rejection.<sup>51</sup> Consider, for instance, the *nkisi* from the Kongo area dating back to the nineteenth century in plate 3. An empowered repository of forces from the spiritual realm in the form of a figure, its turned head and emphatically pursed lips illustrate what appears to be a deeply significant gesture suggesting rejection or suffering in central African visual culture.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, ethnographers and local scholars have linked spitting in the nineteenth century to aggression and insult in west central Africa. Seventeenth-century sources about central Africa do not directly confirm or contradict these observations. Mentions of head gestures still need to be identified and analysed in the historical corpus, while spitting does appear but principally as a ritual technique without necessarily negative connotations.<sup>53</sup> Whether symbolic or citational, the full meaning of the gestures performed by newly arrived central Africans in front of the painting of hell remains elusive. Nonetheless, it is clear these attitudes were perceived by the central African interpreters as signs that the new arrivals understood and unequivocally rejected the idea of hell.

The interpreters' descriptions of the African catechumens' reaction to images of heaven provide further details about the process of linguistic and cultural translation in the Jesuit catechism. In central African languages, as recorded in the c. 1650 Kikongo dictionary, as well as an eighteenth-century vocabulary from north of the Congo River, and in Bernardo Maria de Cannecatim's 1804 Kimbundu word list, the word *mbote* stood at the centre of a deep and broad semantic field denoting ideas of goodness in moral, aesthetic, and material terms. Variations of *mbote* appear in the lexica to translate notions of beauty, happiness, worth, rectitude, approval, and perfection.<sup>54</sup> The term appeared in catechisms and prayers such as those included in Cardoso's doctrine to translate notions of justness, good deeds, as well as to describe heaven as the 'most excellent place'.<sup>55</sup> It is almost certainly to *mbote*, its cognates, and

their wide semantic field that Monzolo turned when he described to newly arrived central Africans the image of the souls in heaven who ‘appeared with great happiness’. His listeners, in turn, ‘express[ed] great happiness’ or *mbote*, here understood as approval and recognition of positive connotation, at the sight of the image and the gloss provided by Monzolo’s words. What central Africans saw in the European image of heaven, and what Monzolo translated in the European inquest as ‘happiness’ was most likely an array of morally, aesthetically, and materially positive notions associated with *mbote*. And yet, despite heaven’s positive connotations, central African witnesses in the beatification inquest dedicate much more explicit and detailed attention to describing the images of hell and their effects on the mission than their passing references to images of heaven.



**3** Unknown artist and ritual specialist, Vili people, *Nkisi bansimba*, before end of nineteenth century. Wood, textile, glass, and other media, 58 × 33 × 24 cm. Berlin: Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

### What Hell is Made Of

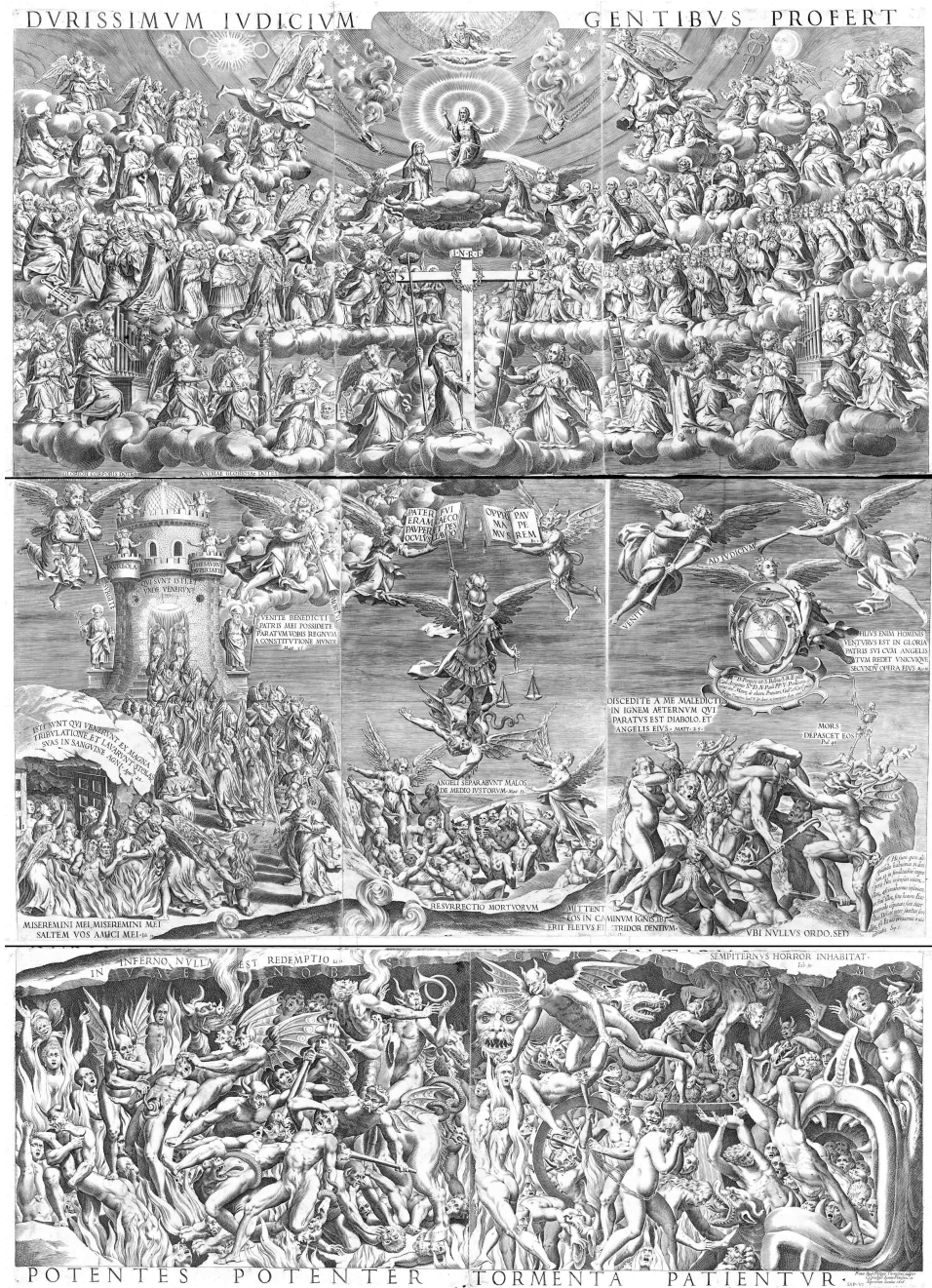
The African interpreters who testified in the beatification inquest for Claver mention two different kinds of images of hell they used in Cartagena: one or two paintings on canvas and one or several prints. According to the inquest testimonies, the paintings were small enough to be easily transportable to the sites of catechism. While Sacabuche describes a painting with only one suffering soul, Monzolo describes one in which there were several. In both cases, the interpreters describe the paintings as showing 'flames', the extreme ugliness of the suffering soul(s), and the presence of torturing demons.<sup>56</sup> These descriptions closely fit the iconography of early modern Iberian and colonial-era South American paintings of hell, purgatory, and Last Judgement (see *plate 1*, *plate 2*, and *plate 5*).<sup>57</sup> These paintings included a broad range of protagonists, from upper to lower class, and individuals of different skin colours. All viewers were invited to identify with the suffering souls and see in their ordeal a lesson that the path to salvation was far preferable to the vividly depicted eternal doom of hell, or the transitory but still unfathomable tortures of purgatory.

The iconography of hell and the souls of purgatory in the Andes has been well studied;<sup>58</sup> its manifestation on the continental Caribbean coast much less so. Paintings displayed and distributed in Cartagena were sometimes produced in the city itself (as is the case with the two portraits made of Claver by local artists shortly before his funeral in 1654), but one suspects from a lack of evidence that the majority of the visual images used in the catechisation of the enslaved arrived from one of three key Iberian centres of art production: southern Spain, Cuzco, or Quito.<sup>59</sup> The Last Judgement and hell were no longer prominent topics in seventeenth-century European paintings although they did still circulate widely as prints. It is therefore likely that the canvas of hell, if not made locally, travelled to the coast from the Andes rather than Spain.<sup>60</sup>

The painted images of hell used in Claver's mission in Cartagena perhaps derived from prints, as was common in modest as well as ambitious artistic compositions in Spanish America and elsewhere.<sup>61</sup> Compositions by engravers such as the Saedlers, Cort, the Wierixes, or Thomassin served as the basis for numerous paintings created across South America.<sup>62</sup> An unnamed artist, for example, drew inspiration from Thomassin's engraving of the Last Judgement in a seventeenth-century or eighteenth-century painting now in the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario in Siachoque, Colombia, staging the horrors of hell, the fateful moment of the second coming, and the peaceful glory of heavens (*plate 4* and *plate 5*).<sup>63</sup> Significantly, the horrors of hell, in both print and canvas, insist on captivity, consumption by sharp-toothed beasts, torture, and pain. The colours chosen by the artist for the oil painting contrast the light-filled blue skies of heaven with the dark-toned confinement of a brown, red, and black hell.

It is with this imagery of eternal confinement and torture in mind, or even in front of their eyes, that captives would receive the repeated admonishments of catechists. The testimony of Ignacio Angola in the beatification inquest shows how the catechists returned to the notion of damnation repeatedly. It came up in their teachings even after conversion, for example to stress the importance of penitence and confession to the newly baptised African men and women. Regularly, Claver and his interpreters would provide Christian captives specific advice about how to prepare for a good death as they faced the next leg of their journey, which for most of them involved being re-shipped from Cartagena to Peru via Panamá.<sup>64</sup> As they boarded yet another slave ship to continue their physical journey to yet another unknown destination, the Jesuit and his interpreters admonished them in stern terms about the importance of confession. It was essential that wherever they might be, should they get gravely sick, they seek confession with a priest or at least perform the act of contrition. The thinly veiled

4 Philippe Thomassin, *The Last Judgement*, 1606. Engraving in 8 sheets, 1480 × 1050 mm. Rome: Biblioteca Casanatense (20 B.I.10 64). Photo: Biblioteca Casanatense.



threat behind this warning is that compliance with Christian end-of-life procedures would save them from an afterlife of interminable captivity and suffering in hell or at best a great deal of time in purgatory. Angola's lesson about the dangers of a death without confession imparted on the threshold of a second slave voyage reinforced the association between hell and captivity aboard a slave ship.

### Slave Ship as Hell

The broader and immediate context of the encounter between the African viewers and the images of hell in Cartagena, namely the process of enslavement and transport in slave ships, is key to understanding the enslaved Africans' physical reaction of recoil to the images, as reported by Sacabuche and Monzolo. The disorienting pain, captivity,

timelessness, and placelessness that the captives had endured during the transatlantic voyage and again in Cartagena conditioned their embodied experience of viewing these images in the barracoons.<sup>65</sup>

Chains, overcrowding, disease, and physical and mental torture are well-documented aspects of the Middle Passage. The torturous conditions were first-person knowledge to the interpreter-catechists who had survived them, and to the Jesuits who had witnessed them.<sup>66</sup> Seville-born Jesuit priest Alonso de Sandoval,



5 Unknown artist, *The Last Judgement*, seventeenth or eighteenth century. Oil on canvas, 218 x 124 cm. Boyacá, Colombia: Iglesia Parroquial de Siachoque. Photo: Giorgio Londoño/Natalia Lozada Mendieta.

who was Claver's mentor in the mission among newly arrived Africans in Cartagena, wrote one of the earliest descriptions of these inhuman elements. Penned within the first five years Claver spent in Cartagena, Sandoval's description of the miseries of the slave ship explicitly sought to entice other missionaries and slave owners to have enough compassion for the enslaved to support evangelical projects among them. Salient in his description of the many aspects of the violence of the journey are the use of chains and instruments of restraint, the claustrophobic conditions of the overpopulated, filthy, rancid space of the hold of the slave ship, the psychological uncertainty of the destination, purpose, and length of the ordeal, all amounting to and exacerbating agonising conditions.

The following section of this essay analyses descriptions by missionaries of the conditions of the Middle Passage. The extracts we quote at length repeat and compound the violence that the victims of the slave trade suffered. Not only are they crude descriptions. Their intended purpose is to instrumentalise the captives' suffering to appeal to potential missionaries' sense of pity and to aggrandise the deeds of the missionaries presented as selfless heroes of superhuman strength for having faced the abject plight of others. We include them here intentionally, humbly, and with a sober awareness of their wounding effects because they are essential to our argument and vital to the broader historical reckoning we aim to perform with it.

Sandoval explains that slavers in western Africa 'secure their pieces or shiploads of human cargo by imprisoning them all together with some very long chains that they call cables, and with other cruel inventions from which they cannot escape on land or sea until they are disembarked in the place to which they are taken'.<sup>67</sup> Sandoval's narration underscores the gruelling experience of confinement caused by the instruments of physical restriction while also connecting that treatment to the terms deployed by traffickers to describe captives as a collective and quantifiable amount of property, in mentioning the terms 'piezas' [pieces] and 'armazones' [shiploads]. Sandoval elaborates further, accentuating the multisensory suffering of the enslaved:

They endure so much suffering, and in the iron chains so much misery and misfortune. The bad treatment of [depriving] food, drink and sustenance is so extreme. It provokes from them so much sadness and melancholy, combining for them [that miserable] life and a certain belief they have that upon arrival they will be made into oil to be eaten. The misery and fear are such that a third of them comes to die in the journey that lasts more than two months. In this journey they are so tightly confined, wretched, and mistreated that those who bring them certify to me that they bring them chained together in groups of six, with collars around their necks attached to cables of chains, and in groups of two with shackles on their feet so that from head to foot they are so constrained, under the hold, locked from the outside, where they cannot see the sun or the moon. The conditions are such that no Spaniard dares to even peer into the hold without making the sign of the cross over themselves, nor would they be able to survive an hour inside without risking a grave illness.<sup>68</sup>

For Sandoval, describing the sadness, fear, and physical misery of the hold of the slave ship is an exercise in reporting others' accounts – explicitly those of slave merchants but also quite possibly those of his frequent interlocutors, the African interpreters themselves. He himself probably only visited the deck of such ships with the interpreters to bring sustenance and announce the catechism to new arrivals. Sandoval's rendering of those accounts accentuates the extreme circumstances of misery and the

cumulative effects of physical and psychological stress in the voyage. The resulting description commands his privileged readers' attention and demands their compassion in the form of supporting the Jesuit mission among new arrivals in Cartagena.

Sandoval's mention of the sign of the cross as a protective gesture against the sight of the ship hold demonstrates how 'Spaniards' keenly perceived the bottom of the vessel as a hazardous realm and how they considered a spiritual appeal to the Christian numinous a shield against those dangers. Notably, the sentence makes a distinction between the bodily illness that could be contracted by a physical presence in the hold and another level of ailment that could be contracted even by mere sight. The latter, we are to understand from the distinction and the recourse to the sign of the cross, was not physical, but psychological or spiritual. And its cure was to be found in recourse to the tools of the Christian: faith in the sign of the cross and its apotropaic powers for this life and the next.

Other European clerics experiencing similar scenes couched the connection between slave ships and the sufferings of damnation in plainer words. For instance, Capuchin missionary to central Africa, Lorenzo da Lucca, reflected on his travels in 1708 from Angola to Brazil on board the *Nossa Senhora do Cabo*, a slave ship carrying 742 captives, in terms that explicitly drew parallels between the Middle Passage and hell. 'The blacks were on the floor like animals, in the midst of filth, and refuse', he wrote in a detailed description that could also capture very well the composition of the South American images of hell Claver used among survivors of these very conditions. He continues: 'some [captives] scream from one side, some from another, some cried, some lamented, some laughed; in sum, it was all chaos, and such was the narrowness of the space that one barely could move because of the great multitude of those blacks'. The hellscape of the slave ship hold and its assaults on the body continue to take form with his words: 'The stench was intolerable; the rest brief because they could hardly close their eyes; eating was almost impossible because of the number of people, and what little [food] was badly prepared'. Friar Lorenzo's paragraph climaxes in a remarkable simile that tells us much about the missionary's perception of the ordeal and of its possible religious significance. 'I do not know', he concludes:

if I must call this ship the image of Hell or that of Purgatory. I know I cannot say that it was the image of Hell, because these sufferings were temporary, and entailed the hope of their end, the name of Hell does not fit. I will call it therefore Purgatory, and I assure you that such a name can apply very well to it, because those who would have endured it, would have gained a way to expiate their sins, and [found it] of great merit to their Soul.<sup>69</sup>

The Capuchin mobilises an *aporia* to communicate the extent of the horror he witnessed: should he call the slave ship hell or purgatory? Theologically the comparison with either realm cannot be more than a metaphor because the established tradition in the Roman Church about hell and purgatory at this period was that their tortures were worse than anything a person could suffer in this life.<sup>70</sup> And though he ultimately cedes that the temporary nature of the transatlantic voyage makes the experience more like purgatory than hell, Friar Lorenzo nonetheless makes full use of the imaginaries related to both to communicate that the experience of being aboard *Nossa Senhora do Cabo* surpassed the limits of what he considered humanly bearable.

The echoes between depicted scenes of the horrific embodied conditions in hell and the experience of the Middle Passage extended to the spatial organisation between the two loci. In the slave ships, as in images of hell, hierarchies of suffering or

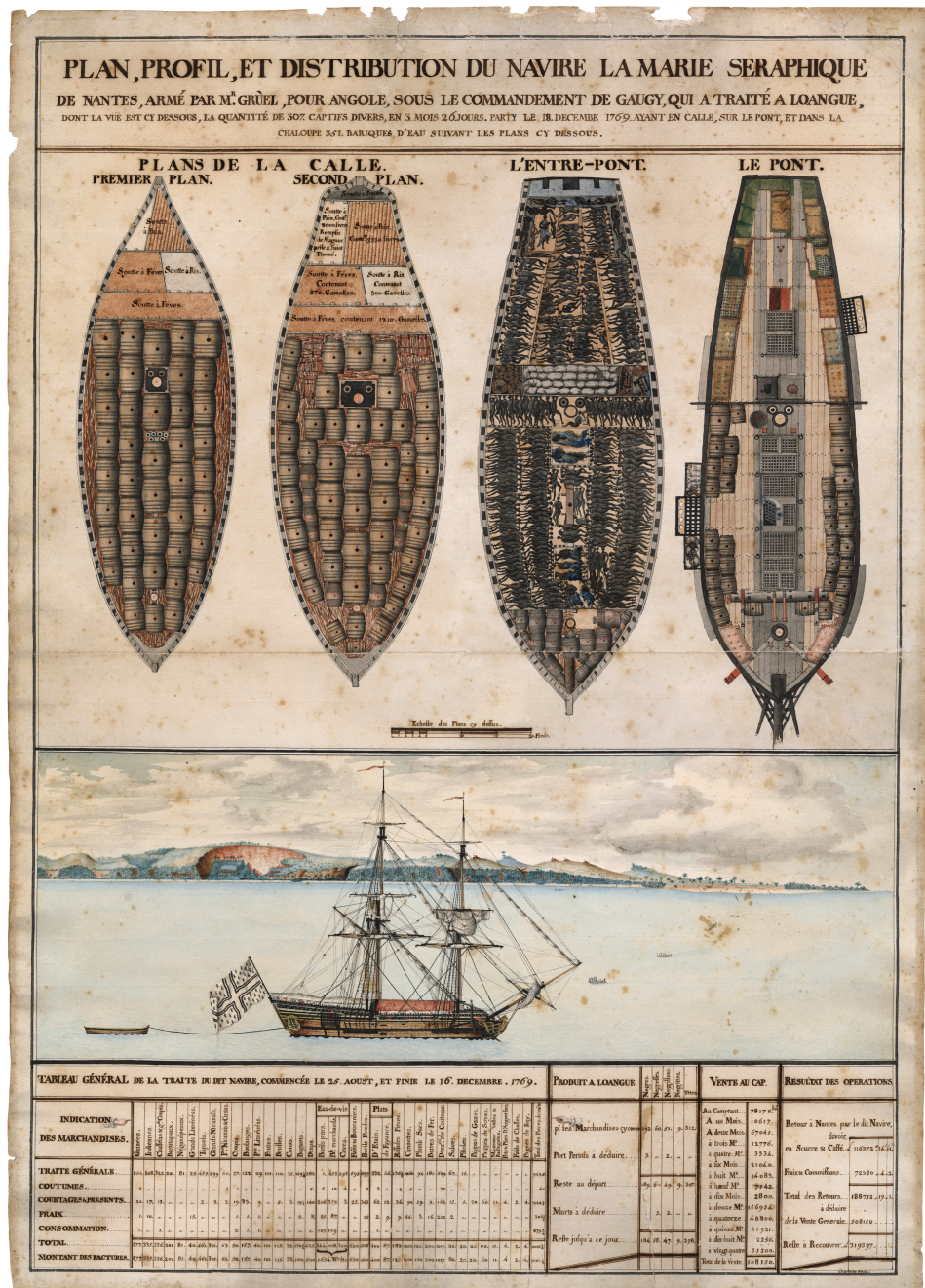
salvation followed a vertical organisation (plate 4 and plate 5). In the painted or printed diagrams of heaven and hell, the bottom layers encase crowded captives, prisoners of their torments in the Christian cosmography's hold.<sup>71</sup> Above, the airy, celestial realm of heaven is organised around symmetries and inhabited with freely moving figures engulfed in a billowing breeze. If life above deck on the slave ship cannot by any means be compared to heaven and could turn into an inferno of its own kind as the site of senseless, banal torture or bloody repression of captives' uprisings, its open-air setting and broad horizons offered at least a stark contrast to the dark, claustrophobic, insufferable conditions of the hold. Two depictions of the slave ship *Marie-Séraphique* created around 1771 by one of the traffickers in charge of the vessel offer an exceedingly rare eye-witness visual document of the contradistinction between the two spaces as the enslaved would have experienced them (plate 6 and plate 7).<sup>72</sup> The overlapping of limbs and bodies below deck in plate 6 stands miles apart from the sunny, though sinister scene of buyers welcomed on deck with a lavish spread of food and drinks as they conduct their purchases in slaves in plate 7.<sup>73</sup>

In fact, many aspects of the experience of the ship's hold continued for the enslaved on land. The vertical hierarchy of suffering in space was embedded in the architecture of the houses-turned-barracoons where traders kept the enslaved after their arrival in Cartagena. Captives lived in the hot and breezeless ground level. They were allowed to circulate in the houses' inner courtyards during the day, and were then locked at night in large rooms in conditions that proved fatal to many.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, privileged elites of the city inhabited the well-ventilated upper floors of the two-storey houses that were increasingly being constructed with skylights and balconies to counteract the heat.<sup>75</sup> In those elite households, enslaved labourers and, notably, animals, were kept on the ground level. A 1628 manuscript map shows the dense urban architecture within the walled city of Cartagena featuring some of those multi-storey buildings facing the port, the sea, and many ships depicted in heroic scale befitting their importance to the standing of the city (plate 8). While no longer trapped on board a slave ship, recently arrived captives held en masse within those city walls were still constrained in space, limited in movement, and subject to intense heat and proximity to the sick and dying.

### Beyond the Anonymous Mass

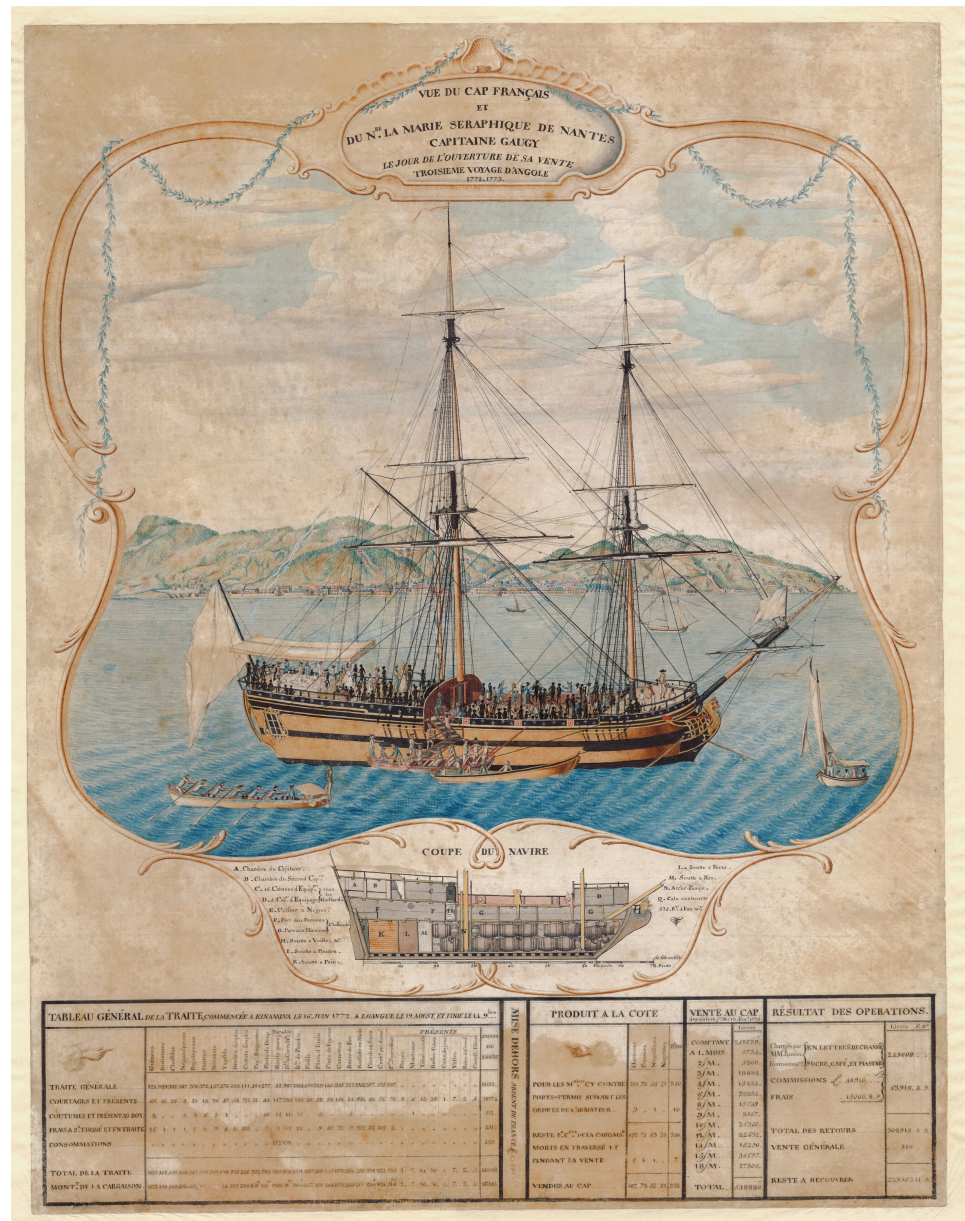
It was in courtyards or large rooms adjacent to these spaces of tight confinement and illness that the Jesuits and their interpreter-catechists approached the new arrivals for their formal catechism. The surviving textual evidence for those catechetical encounters, whether prescribed as in Sandoval's treatise or described as in the accounts from Claver's beatification inquest, couched the process as one of sympathy on the part of the missionaries. These texts foreground the missionary-heroes, and their attention to the enslaved. The authors and editors shaping the texts clearly did not conceive of the catechumens as individuals. With the exception of those called on to testify to their experiences of being evangelised by Claver and helping him catechise others in the beatification inquest, the African men and women caught in the slave trade appear in these texts as an anonymous mass of abstractions – *armazones* [shiploads], *piezas* [pieces] – and then Christians. Sandoval's or Claver's empathy for their suffering derived from the missionaries' hopes for the salvation of innumerable souls in a massive triumph for their apostolic endeavours. Conversion, like the slave trade itself, was a matter of numbers and found in accounting a devoted ally. For example, early modern Catholic missions consistently kept an account in their annual reports of the astonishing numbers of souls they saved through baptism.<sup>76</sup> In this perspective, individual conversion mattered only in so far as it contributed to the whole.

The frontispiece to the second edition of Sandoval's treatise on African evangelisation in Spanish America illustrates this vision of Jesuit mass missionary success (plate 9). In the top corners of the page, in oval cameos, Jesuit heroes St Francis Xavier and Andres de Oviedo baptise a crowd of people, devoutly kneeling in front of them in the attitude of prayer. The scenes from this 1647 engraving by Juan de Noort take place in different locations, a fact suggested by the contrasting trees in the two roundels, a palm to the left and a broadleaf to the right. The clerics are two different men with distinct dress and physical features. One of the two, St Francis Xavier, to the left, is further distinguished with a halo around his saintly head. The baptisands, in contrast, are remarkably homogeneous. They are all of the same size, in the same posture, with the same hair and features and the same scant clothing.



Curls, loincloths, and near nakedness mark them as black and outside the bounds of European civilisation, but without any further indication of specific cultures of origin. The image leaves no room for individuality, not even in a collective sense. Neither does it give the possibility of apprehending them as subjects participating in the event. Their position in the images is firmly that of the object of Jesuit action.

Yet, the missionary archive also holds in its discursive layers the possibility for alternative readings. The appeals missionaries made to the sensory experiences of enslavement for the sake of impressing their readers or as efficacious catechisation tools open a space within which scholars can see beyond both the treatment of catechumens as an anonymous mass and the slave trade's violence of abstraction. The sensory details made visible in this approach to the archive are still vanishingly few, and their contours amorphous, but they are also vital in writing a fuller history of the slave trade. The physical recoil of the enslaved from the pictures of hell, as described by the African interpreters who helped explain the meaning of those images to the



7 Attributed to Jean-René Lhermitte, *View of Cap Français and of the ship Marie-Séraphique, capitaine Gaugy, on the day of the beginning of sales, third trip to Angola, 1772–73*. Watercolour on paper, 55 × 43 cm. Nantes: Musée d'Histoire de Nantes. Photo: Musée d'Histoire de Nantes.



**8** Attributed to Cristóbal de Roda al Rey, map of Cartagena de Indias and its surroundings, 1628. Watercolour and ink on paper, 450 × 870 mm. Seville: Archivo General de Indias, MP-Panama, 45. Photo: MCD/Archivos Estatales.

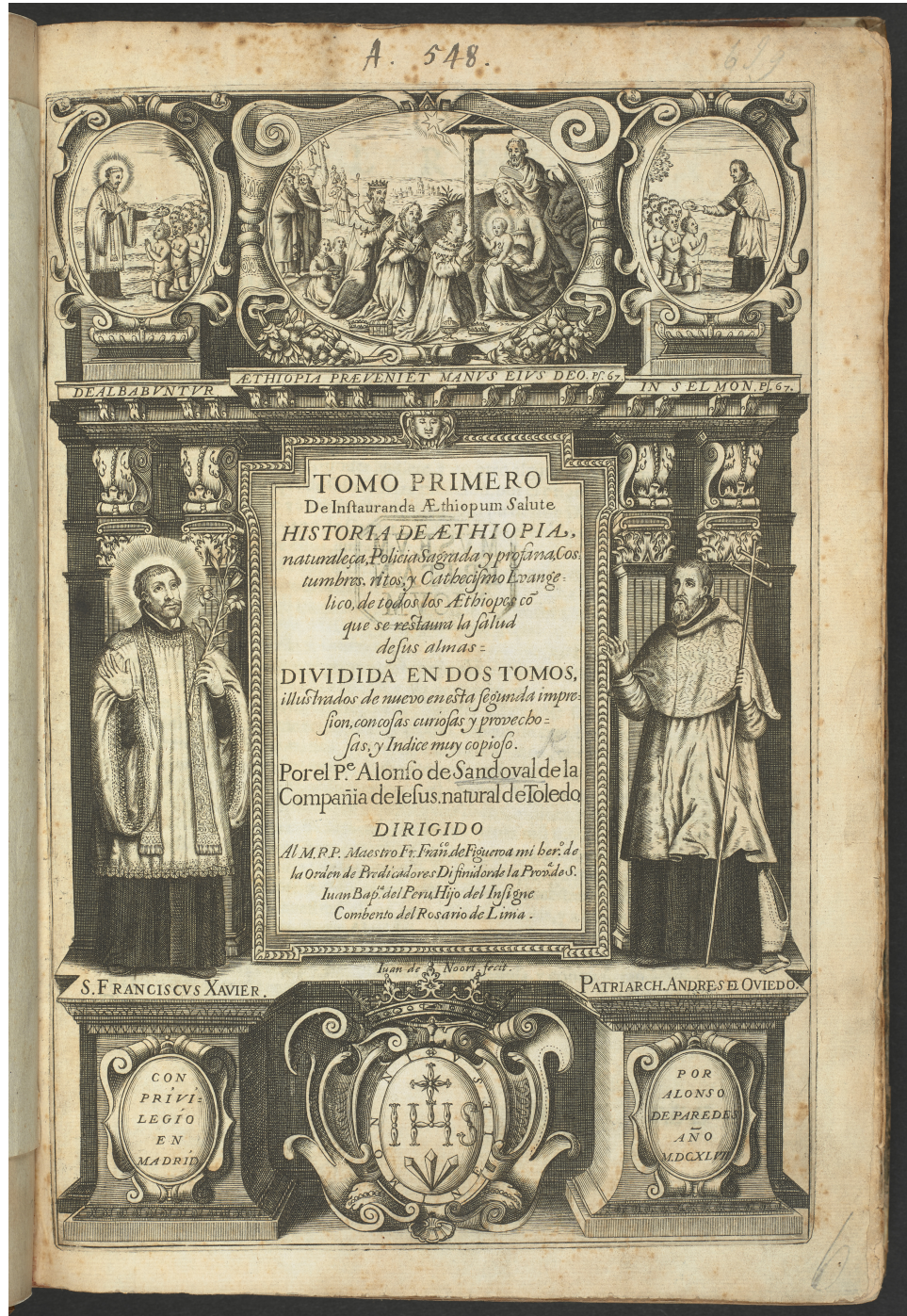
catechumens, is one such moment in which testimonies portray the enslaved not as a shapeless objectified mass (as images such as those illustrating Sandoval's treatise would suggest), but as individuals reacting as subjects to a forceful symbolic and spiritual confrontation.

Appeals to the senses and to sympathetic projection from the image to the viewer's body were key techniques put to work in Catholic imagery of hell and its punishment outside of the context of the transatlantic slave trade. Viewers were expected to flinch at their vicarious experience of the eternal suffering awaiting sinners in hell, and choose instead the seemingly more arduous path of virtue, which, though more demanding in the present, held boundless rewards in the future. In the houses-turned-barracoons of Cartagena such images took on another dimension. The display of the canvas of hell put the captives face-to-face with a visual depiction of the kind of brutal sensory reality that had shaped their experience since their ties with their familial, social, and spiritual home had been severed when they were forced into transatlantic deportation. Their reaction to images of hell, as described by interpreters in the beatification inquest, was also a visceral response to the conditions of the Middle Passage and continued captivity inside the barracoons. The interpreters' testimonies therefore momentarily capture the terror of individuals faced with images of their trauma.<sup>77</sup>

### **A Vast Atlantic Imagery of Beastly Consumption**

The encounter between the enslaved and images of hell that took place at the intersection between Christian proselytism and the slave trade participated in broader visual and narrative trends that shaped the Atlantic world. The men and women Claver and his interpreters confronted with verbal and visual images of hell had brought with them beliefs and fears about the outcome of their voyage. These beliefs and fears, honed on the African Atlantic coast along decades of engagement with the slave trade, would further orient their approach to the images and the words presented to them. Echoing the fears of the captives in the hold described

9 Juan de Noort, frontispiece for Alonso de Sandoval's *Historia de Aethiopia*, 280 x 200 mm Madrid: Paredes, 1647. Photo: British Library Board.



by Sandoval, Monzolo himself recalled from his own arrival in Cartagena how the enslaved understood that ‘Spaniards (whom they call whites) bring them [to their lands] to kill them and make oil from them’. ‘And when the flags of the ships are dyed red [están pintados de colorado]’, Monzolo further explains, the captives think it was because ‘they are painted with the blood of blacks’. And thus the captives ‘are frightened by it and many of them despair from it’.<sup>78</sup> Sacabuche also mentions having possessed a similar belief upon arrival in Cartagena.<sup>79</sup> Such opinions were not idiosyncratic to documents produced in Cartagena around the Jesuit mission, but appear in a number of testimonies across the Atlantic World.<sup>80</sup>

The threat communicated by the paintings and prints of hell could therefore be interpreted as doubly literal: a visualisation of an afterlife that would bring the continuation of the abject conditions of the Middle Passage, and a worldly future cooked in the flames of European witches to be consumed for their benefit as food, dye, or other commodities. In fact, the second formulation demonstrates a largely accurate understanding of the mechanisms of chattel slavery and its transformation of the often life-ending labour of Africans into consumable goods for the European but also African market, such as sugar and liquor. Monzolo's and Sacabuche's memories were not only shared by other Africans recorded in the archive. They were also echoed in European views, perhaps most famously in Voltaire's *Candide*, wherein an enslaved man from Surinam glosses his mutilated hand and leg as 'the cost of Europe's eating sugar'.<sup>81</sup>

African artists on the continent's Atlantic coast gave visual form to the association between transatlantic trade, gluttonous consumption, and African suffering in objects such as luxury carved ivories that used the motif of amphibious predation (plate 10 and plate 11). Circulating across the Atlantic as merchandise and diplomatic gifts, these objects both represented and effected the connection between seaborne commerce and the imagery they deployed. Given the pre-eminence of slave traffic in the transatlantic commercial engagement of the African societies who produced such objects, their iconography functioned at least partly as a trope for the social, political, and commercial context of the slave trade. Ivory figurative salt cellars, carved tusks, and finely worked spoons made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in different areas of Africa's Atlantic coast and destined for European patrons frequently featured crocodiles and devouring mouths.<sup>82</sup> Some decorated tusks ended in crocodilian finials echoing European heraldic animals as in the sixteenth- or seventeenth-century example now in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris (see plate 10). Other ivories showed open jaws full of teeth, or crocodiles that devoured animals or people (see plate 11).<sup>83</sup> The greedy jowls sometimes accompanied scenes of animal hunting redolent of the mode of capture of victims of the trade.<sup>84</sup> The interplay between crocodiles and human figures likely held local spiritual or emblematic significance, but, as it appeared regularly on objects created for trade with Europeans and made in distinct cultural areas of the continent, it also undeniably held additional connections with transoceanic commerce in ivory



**10 Unknown Sapi artist, oliphant, early sixteenth century. Ivory, 70.5 × 14 × 7.5 cm. Paris: Musée du Quai Branly (inv. 71.1933.6.3). Photo: Musée du Quai Branly.**

and in people, the two pre-eminent currencies for international exchange that emerged from the outset of maritime commerce with Europe.<sup>85</sup> The metaphor of the devouring crocodile does not feature to our knowledge on any surviving early modern central African trade objects, whose designs were predominantly abstract. It does appear, however, in the nineteenth century, for instance on an ivory tusk carved on the same Loango coast that hosted the slave-buying expeditions of the Marie-S raphique ship, and later felt the full blow of European colonial imperialist assaults. The ivory includes among its detailed carved chronicle of daily life the image of amphibian beasts eating humans in an enduring trope for the violence of Atlantic trade networks (plate 12).



11 Unknown Sapi artist, salt cellar (missing lid), sixteenth century (?). Elephant ivory, 13 cm (height). Basel: Museum der Kulturen (inv. no. III.21474). Photo: Museum der Kulturen.

12 Unknown artist from the Loango coast, carved elephant tusk from the Loango coast, Vili, Republic of the Congo or Democratic Republic of the Kongo, late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Ivory, 112 cm (height). Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum of Art (inv. 71.2409.) Photo: Chrysler Museum of Art.



The west African motif of the crocodilian jaws, and more largely the idea of African bodies being consumed and disappearing into European spaces, would find powerful echo on the other side of the Middle Passage in the representations of the mouth of hell and of gluttonous demons, as seen in the gaping-mouthed beast by the gates of hell in the Andahuaylillas painting, the dragon- and reptile-like creatures consuming souls in the lower left and centre of the painting in the *Compañía* church in Quito or the sharp-toothed demons spread throughout hell in the anonymous painting from Siachoque (see plate 2 and plate 5). This imagery was, of course,

modelled on a long tradition in Byzantine and Western Europe for portraying hell.<sup>86</sup> But within the context of the transatlantic slave trade, these iconographies take on additional layers of meaning. Considered together, bestial allegories of hell and ivory crocodilian emblems of trade flesh out a transatlantic imaginary and iconography linking enslavement, torture, and consumption.

Motifs such as infernal pots stewing condemned souls, as seen in the lower centre of the painting in Quito (see *plate 2*), while also originating in European imagery, recall the fears slave traders reported among their captives that the cauldrons they used on deck to cook food were instruments of cannibalism.<sup>87</sup> Witnesses in Claver's beatification inquest from many different regions of the African Atlantic also testified to their fears of European cannibalism at the outset of their capture and into the Middle Passage. With their verbal glosses of the images of hell Claver and his interpreters activated and propagated these conceptions and gave them new Christian tenor.

### Conclusion

The Jesuits in Cartagena did not stop deploying images of hell after catechumens had converted. In fact, it appears that, as in Cuzco, long after linguistic translation was considered unnecessary to communicate with converted catechumens, images of hell were used as a means of coercion and control. An anecdote from Jesuit sacristan Nicolás González's lengthy testimony in the beatification inquest describes how Claver once stopped a distressed African woman from running away to a maroon community outside the city by showing her a printed image of hell. This woman, according to González, had resolved to flee her captivity because of a conflict with her owner. Before leaving, she decided to inform Claver:

She went to see him and tell him about her affliction and the choice she had made, to which the father responded, reprimanding her greatly and encouraging her to endure the suffering of her enslavement. And finally he showed her an image on a paper folio where there was depicted a damned soul, engulfed in hellish flames. And putting it in front of her he said that if she ran away from suffering she would find even greater suffering because she would be running towards the pains of hell which that soul was enduring. He presented this and so many other efficacious reasons that he persuaded her to say, full of repentance, to the father that she no longer wanted to run away but to go back to her house to serve her owner as in effect she did, calm and consoled and even freed from her passion, as if a fire had been smothered with a jug of water.<sup>88</sup>

González's closing turn of phrase presents the power of the image compounded with Claver's reprimand as analogous to stifling great flames and spiritually liberating the enslaved woman. For González, Claver should be celebrated for thus caring for the soul of the enslaved woman and protecting the property of the city's elites. She was persuaded, according to the sacristan, through the image of hell and Claver's narrative of future recompense for her patience and pains in the present. Tellingly, González focuses on the good example her change of heart set for other black women of her nation who were watching:

And when the said black woman told this story to this witness it was in the Jesuit church of this city, and he knows that several other black women of her nation were present. He does not remember any of them in particular [...].<sup>89</sup>

The anonymity with which González treats the woman and her presumed compatriots reveals yet again the irrelevance of the actual lives and experiences of the enslaved for the Jesuit project that produced the inquest. The anecdote thus finds its place in a longer story of the instrumentalisation of images of hell alongside the trauma of the slave trade and of enslavement on the part of the Jesuits. And yet, it is also worth reflecting on the vast Atlantic imagery mobilised in the supposed efficacy of Claver's strategy at which González marvels. Was it the image of hell that stopped the woman in her tracks? Was it the conflation of hell and the Middle Passage that the Jesuits and the African interpreters had activated since the arrival of the captives in Cartagena? Or was the woman only rehearsing a learned reaction to the image while instrumentalising her relationship with Claver to incite him to mediate with her owner on her behalf?

In reflecting on this anecdote and on the others included in this essay by placing them within a broader corpus of images, lexica, and sensory experiences, we have tried to chart a new course for the study of the intersections between the Atlantic slave trade and colonial Christian proselytism. This course seeks to avoid statistical dehumanisation or oversimplified generalisations about the lack of sources available to study the transatlantic traffic from the point of view of the enslaved. It attends to interpretatively opaque texts and to written records of no longer existing images paired with their extant comparanda, paying 'twofold attention'<sup>90</sup> to the evidence these images and discourse provide about how the enslaved experienced and made sense of their arrival in Cartagena de Indias. By lending a critical eye to the possibilities the sources hold and withhold, we have sought to push 'the limit of the unspeakable and the unknown' about what the transatlantic crossing meant to those who survived it.<sup>91</sup>

With an art history of the unseen and a literary analysis of obliquely recorded discourse, we have crafted an argument that centres African men and women. The protagonists of our study are Andrés Sacabuche, Ignacio Angola, José Monzolo, and countless other Africans whose names the written archives of slavers and colonisers did not record. As catechists or catechumens, and as survivors of the Middle Passage, they viewed and interpreted works of art while reckoning with Catholic religious dogma. In doing so, they made connections between vastly different systems of belief, cosmological conceptions, and visual orders of representation in a critical moment whose macro-historical import cannot be overestimated, for it laid some of the earliest foundations for the making of Afro-Latin American spirituality and the advent of the Black Atlantic.

#### Notes

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- 1 'Proceso ordinario de beatificación de Pedro Claver' (henceforth *Proceso ordinario*), an unedited manuscript in the Archivo Segreto Vaticano, Congregazione Riti Processus, Cause dei santi, 'Proc. Ord. Carthaginen. s. fama, 1658', 1176. While the populations of Africans arriving in Cartagena in the seventeenth century was much more diverse, this essay focuses on the testimonies given by interpreters from west central Africa about the experiences of enslaved men and women deported from the same region because central African interpreters' accounts about the Jesuit evangelical project in Cartagena are some of the lengthiest and most detailed in the inquest. Central Africa in this essay refers to the watershed of the Congo River, with an emphasis on the region in and around the Kingdom of Kongo and the Mbundu-speaking areas historically known as Angola. Andrés Sacabuche mentions being from Angola and that he speaks the language of Angola (Kimbundu) and 'Anchico', the latter referring to the area around Malebo Pool. José Monzolo's name, also transcribed as Manzolo, suggests an origin in the Nzolo area of Mbata province of the Kingdom of Kongo. He says he can speak the language of

- the Kongo and of 'Monzolo', two variants of Kikongo. Interpreter Ignacio Angola was brought by the Jesuits from Angola as a young boy specifically to be an enslaved interpreter of Kimbundu. On the variety of west African ports from which slave ships arrived in Cartagena, see Alonso de Sandoval, *Naturalza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos etiopeos*, Seville, 1627, book 1, chapter 1, 5r–8v; Larissa Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada*, New York, 2020, 89–90. On the historical linguistic variants of Kikongo, see Koen Bostoen and Gilles-Maurice de Schryver, 'Seventeenth-century Kikongo is Not the Ancestor of Present-day Kikongo', in *The Kongo Kingdom: The Origins, Dynamics and Cosmopolitan Culture of an African Polity*, ed. Koen Bostoen and Inge Brinkman, Cambridge, 2018, 60–102.
- 2 *Proceso de beatificación y canonización de San Pedro Claver*, trans. and ed. Tulio Aristizábal and Anna Maria Splendiani, Bogota, 2002. For scholarship based on the Spanish translation of the printed and edited 1696 book that summarises and synthesises the testimonies of the beatification inquest, see the introduction to Aristizábal's and Splendiani's translation; Paola Vargas Arana, 'Pedro Claver y la evangelización en Cartagena: Pilar del encuentro entre africanos y el Nuevo Mundo, siglo XVII', *Frnteras de la historia*, II, 2006, 293–328; Tulio Aristizábal, *Los jesuitas en Cartagena de Indias*, Cartagena, 2009; Andrea Mosquera Guerrero, *De África a la Nueva Granada: La evangelización de los africanos en Cartagena de Indias desde una perspectiva Atlántica (1605–1698)*, PhD Dissertation, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico, 2018.
  - 3 Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*. See also Larissa Brewer-García, 'Imagined Transformations: Color, Beauty, and Black Christian Conversion in Seventeenth-Century Spanish America', in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela A. Patton, Leiden, 2016, 11–41, and Brewer-García, 'Gender and the Work of Missionary Translation: The Case of Black Women Interpreters in Seventeenth-Century Cartagena de Indias', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 21: 4, Fall 2021, 63–100. The latter, actually printed in 2023, uses citations from the Spanish-language inquest.
  - 4 The rare sources before the later eighteenth century include African testimonies in Portuguese and Spanish Inquisition records; see among many others Daniela Buono Calainho, 'Africanos penitenciados pela Inquisicao portuguesa', *Revista Lusofona de Ciencia das Religioes*, 3: 5/6, 2004, 47–63; Cécile Fromont, 'Paper, Ink, Vodun, and the Inquisition: Tracing Power, Slavery, and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Portuguese Atlantic', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 88: 2, 2020, 460–504; Andrea Guerrero-Mosquera, 'Bolsas Mandingas en Cartagena de Indias durante el siglo XVII', *Memorias. Revista Digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe*, 43, 2021, 69–93, Luis Mott, 'Feiticeiros de Angola na América portuguesa vítimas da Inquisição', *Revista Pós Ciências Sociais*, 5: 9/10, 2012, 85–104. For other early African testimonies in the Hispanic Atlantic, see Kathryn Joy McKnight and Leo J. Garofalo, eds, *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early Modern Ibero-Atlantic World, 1550–1812*, Indianapolis, 2009; Úrsula de Jesús, *Las almas del purgatorio: El diario espiritual y vida anónima de Úrsula de Jesús, una mística negra del siglo XVII*, ed. Nancy van Deusen, Lima, 2012; and Juan Francisco Manzano, 'Autobiografía de un esclavo' (1840) in *Autobiografía del esclavo Poeta y otros escritos*, ed. William Luis, Madrid, 2007. On early Moravian records of African voices from the Caribbean and North America, see Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World*, Philadelphia, 2018. On the long bibliography on the later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North American slave narratives, see John Ernest, *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, New York, 2014; Nicole N. Aljoe and Ian Frederick Finseth, *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, Charlottesville, 2014.
  - 5 Linda M. Rodriguez and Ada Ferrer, 'Collaborating with Aponte: Digital Humanities, Art, and the Archive', *SX Archipelagos*, 3, 2019, 1–16.
  - 6 Linda Rodriguez, Ada Ferrer, Kris Minhae Choe, and Eric Anderson, 'Digital Aponte', 2018, <https://aponte.hosting.nyu.edu/>; Ada Ferrer, 'Slavery, Freedom, and the Work of Speculation', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 23: 1, 2019, 220–228. On the question of archives and recovery in the context of the slave trade, see also Laura Helton, Justin Leroy, Max A. Mishler, Samantha Seeley, and Shauna Sweeney, 'The Question of Recovery: An Introduction', *Social Text*, 33: 4, 2015, 1–18; Jennifer L. Morgan, 'Archives and Histories of Racial Capitalism: An Afterword', *Social Text*, 33: 4, 2015, 153–161.
  - 7 Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, New York, 2007, 338–339; Tye Landels, Isabel Bradley, Kelsey Desir, Grant Glass, Jane Harwell, Anya Lewis Meeks, and Charlotte Sussman, "'Died a Small Boy": Re-Centering the Human in Geospatial Data from the Middle Passage', *archipelagos*, 7, 2023, DOI: 10.7916/archipelagos-aszw-fy69.
  - 8 About the violence of slavery's archive and historical practice, see Brian Connolly and Marisa J. Fuentes, 'Introduction: From Archives of Slavery to Liberated Futures?', *History of the Present*, 6: 2, 105–116. This question has been deeply pondered by historians of the slave trade. A summary on this scholarship appears in Landels et al., "'Died a Small Boy"'.
  - 9 Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe*, 12: 2, 2008, 1–14; Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, Cambridge, MA, 2009; Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, Philadelphia, 2020; Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*, Durham, NC, 2021. See also the special issue of *History of the Present*, 6: 2, 2016, ed. Connolly and Fuentes.
  - 10 *Proceso ordinario*, Andrés Sacabuche, 265r–v.
  - 11 Alonso de Sandoval, *Naturalza, policia sagrada i profana*, Seville, 1627, book 3, chapter 8, 267v–268r; chapter 10, 275v.
  - 12 *Proceso ordinario*, Andrés Sacabuche, 270v. The language of the original is 'para que mas bien se enterassen en su açerbo rigor'.
  - 13 Jaime Valenzuela Márquez, 'Ambigüedades de la imagen en la cristianización del Perú: Trento, los jesuitas y el Tercer Concilio', *Investigaciones Sociales*, 17, 2006, 496–503.
  - 14 Translation from Ananda Cohen Suarez [Aponte], *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in between: Murals of the Colonial Andes*, Austin, 2016, 51. Original in Antonio de la Vega, *Historia y narración de las cosas sucedidas en este Colegio del Cuzco desde su fundación hasta hoy, 1 de noviembre Día de Todos los Santos, año de 1600*, ed. Rubén Vargas Ugarte, Lima, 1948, 42–43.
  - 15 For a longer analysis of the painting and the sixteenth-century Hieronymus Wierix print that inspired it, see Cohen Suarez [Aponte], *Heaven, Hell*, 51–82.
  - 16 Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, chapter 3.
  - 17 About the difficulties of translation in the Kongo, see Cécile Fromont, *Images on a Mission in Early Modern Kongo and Angola*, University Park, 2022, 159–160; Juan de Santiago, *Breve Relacion de lo sucedido a doce religiosos cappuchinos de la santa sede apostolica embio por misionarios apostolicos al reyno de Congo*, Real Biblioteca del Palacio, Madrid, Ms. II/772, 160–161; Bernardino d'Asti, *Missione in prattica* Vatican Library, MS Borg. Lat. 316, 39; Bernardino d'Asti, *Missione in prattica*, Biblioteca Civica di Torino, MS 457, fol. 6r. On faulty translation among Andean catechumens, see Pablo José Arriaga, *La extirpación de la idolatría del Pirú [1621]*, Cuzco, 1999, 73.
  - 18 For the debates between Franciscans and Dominicans on the translation of 'Dios' into Indigenous languages in central America, see Fray Ramón Remesal, 'Diferencias entre dominicos y franciscanos sobre la traducción del término "Dios" a idiomas aborígenes (1551)', in *Documentos sobre política lingüística en Hispanoamérica (1492–1800)*, Madrid, 1991, 56–57; and José Rabasa, *Tell Me the Story of How I Conquered You*, Austin, 2011, 56.
  - 19 On Spanish America, see Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, chapter 2; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, 'Los jesuitas y la "lengua de Angola" en Perú (siglo XVII)', *Revista de Indias*, 53: 198, 1993, 627–637; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, 'Los inicios del "ministerio de negros" en la provincial jesuítica del Paraguay', *Anuario de estudios americanos*, 62: 1, 2005, 141–160, 148–150. On Portuguese America, see Jean-Pierre Angenot, Catherine Barbara Kempf, and Vatomene Kukanda, 'Arte da língua de Angola de Pedro Dias (1697) sob o prisma da dialetologia kimbundu', *Papia: Revista brasileira de estudos crioulos e similares*, 21: 2, 2011, 231–252; Ivana Stolze Lima, 'Na Bahia, a arte da língua de Angola', *Comunidades linguísticas no mundo atlântico. VI Simposio nacional de História. 22 a 26 de julho de 2013*. [http://snh2013.anpuh.org/resources/anais/27/1371346755\\_ARQUI\\_VO\\_ArtigoAnpuh2013.pdf](http://snh2013.anpuh.org/resources/anais/27/1371346755_ARQUI_VO_ArtigoAnpuh2013.pdf).
  - 20 *Oraciones traducidas en lengua del Reino de Angola*, Lima, 1629, unpaginated, postscript, 15.
  - 21 Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, chapter 2.
  - 22 Kara D. Schultz, "'The Kingdom of Angola is not Very Far from Here": The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640', *Slavery &*

- Abolition, 36: 3, 2015, 424–444; Tardieu, 'Los inicios del "ministerio de negros"'.  
 23 On the production history of Matheus Cardoso, *Doutrina christãa, composta pelo P. Marcos Jorge da Companhia de IESU... De novo traduzida na lingua do Reyno de Congo*, Lisbon, 1624, see François Bontick and D. Ndembe Nsasi, *Le catechism Kikongo de 1624, reedition critique*, Brussels, 1978; Carlos Almeida, 'Christianity in Kongo', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, Oxford, 2021. See also the c. 1635 letter, 'En razon si conviene entablar en esta provincial de la Compañía de Jesús del Pirú que aprendan la lengua Angola de los Negros' (Appendix A), in Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, 251–260. See Jean-Pierre Tardieu, 'Jesuitas y "la lengua de Angola"', and Tardieu, 'Los inicios del "ministerio de negros"', on the small number of European priests in Tucumán (northern Argentina) who were approved to take their fourth vow in the order based on their knowledge of Kimbundu.  
 24 Catarina Madeira Santos, 'Écrire le pouvoir en Angola', *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 64:4, 2009, 767–795.  
 25 This translation of hell as 'bulungui' in Kikongo also appears in the 1648 *Vocabularium Latinum, hispanicum et congense*, *Fondi minori* 1896, Mss. Varia 274, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio-Emmanuele II di Roma. John Thornton, 'Afro-Christian Syncretism in the Kingdom of Kongo', *Journal of African History*, 54: 1, 2013, 53–77, 72, n. 84, identifies Cardoso's doctrine and the 1648 dictionary as composed in the same dialect of Kikongo (Kisansala). On the Christianisation of the Kongo, see Carlos Almeida, 'A primeira missão da Companhia de Jesus no reino do Congo (1548–1555)', in *D. João III e o Império. Actas do Congresso Internacional comemorativo do seu nascimento*, ed. Roberto Carneiro and Artur Teodoro de Matos, Lisbon, 2004, 865–888; John Thornton, 'The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 1491–1750', *Journal of African History*, 25: 2, 1984, 147–167; Linda Heywood and John Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas*, New York, 2007, 60–67; Cécile Fromont, *Art of Conversion*.  
 26 In Cardoso's *Doctrina*, 'bulungui' appears on 26v, 37r, 78v, 80r, 81r, 81v, 82v, 102r. 'Infernos' is adopted into the Kikongo text twice on 37r–v. Thornton's, 'Afro-Christian Syncretism', 68 suggests that using Kikongo terms for these Christian concepts (except in the erroneous circumstances indexed above) was a corrective to the circulation of mispronounced and misunderstood Latin terms among Kongoese Christians. *Bilungi* or *bulungi* remains the common translation of hell in Kikongo. On 'bulungui', see Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, Oxford, 1985, 91–92; William Holman Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language*, London, 1886, 253.  
 27 *Vocabularium*, 47v.  
 28 Cardoso, *Doutrina*, 37r, emphasis added. This part of Cardoso's catechism is taken from the expanded second edition of Marcos Jorge's catechism for children that Cardoso identifies as the model for his own. See Marcos Jorge, *Doctrina Christam*, Lisbon, 1575, unpaginated, 37–38.  
 29 Cardoso, *Doutrina*, 37r–v.  
 30 The same use of plural Portuguese and otherwise 'bulungui' appears in Giacinto Brugiotti da Vetralla, *Doctrina Christiana ad profectum missionis totius Regni Congi in quatuor linguis per correlativas columnas distincta. Eminentiss. ac Reverendiss. S.R.E. Cardinalibus Sac. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide exhibitae, et dicata a F. Hyacintho Brusciotto a Vetralla Concionatore capuccino, ecc.*, Rome, 1650, 74.  
 31 John Thornton, 'Afro-Christian Syncretism'; Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo*, Chapel Hill, 2014; Almeida, 'Christianity in Kongo'.  
 32 Jean-Joseph Descourvières, and R. F. C. Cuénot (copyist), *Dictionnaire françois et Congo*, 1775, Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon, MS 525, 259.  
 33 On Christianisation in Angola, see John Thornton, 'Conquest and Theology: The Jesuits in Angola, 1548–1650', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 1, 2014, 245–259; Graziano Saccardo, *Angola e Congo con la storia dell'antica missione dei Cappuccini*, Venezia-Mestre, 1982–83.  
 34 Francisco Pacconio, *Genio de Angola sufficientemente instruido nos mysterios de nossa sancta fé*, Lisbon, 1642.  
 35 The Portuguese governor of Angola described Father Dionísio de Faria Barreto as 'filho da terra, que sabia bem a língua [Native of the land, who knew the language well]'. See Letter of Fernão de Sousa to the King of Portugal dated 2 March 1632, in Antonio Brásio, *Monumenta missionaria africana. África ocidental*, Lisbon, 1960, vol. 8, 156–157.  
 36 On António de Couto, see Ivana Stolze Lima, 'Slavery and Communication in the Atlantic World: The "Angola Language" (17th century)', *História Unisinos*, 21: 1, 2017, 113–114; Diógo Barbosa Machado, *Bibliotheca Lusitana*, Coimbra, 1741, Tomo I, 252; John Thornton, 'The African Experience of the "20. and Odd Negroes" Arriving in Virginia in 1619', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 55: 3, 1998, 421–434, 433.  
 37 Bernardo Maria de Cannecattim, *Diccionario da lingua Bunda ou Angolense*, Lisbon, 1804, 468.  
 38 'Letter of Father Francisco Pacconio of 18 February 1627', in António Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana, África Ocidental*, vol. 7, Lisboa, 1956, 505.  
 39 Calogero Piazza, *La prefettura apostolica del Congo alla meta del XVII secolo: La relazione inedita di Geraldo da Montesarchio*, Milan, 1976, 328.  
 40 Cited in Carlo Toso, *L'Anarchia congolese nel sec. XVII: La relazione inedita di Marcellino d'Atri*, Genova, 1984, 64.  
 41 Report on the Jesuit mission to Kongo in António Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana, África Ocidental*, vol. 2, 1953, 212.  
 42 The nature of cosmologies in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century central Africa is not fully understood, and is the object of scholarly debate. On Indigenous religion in early modern central Africa, see among others José Carlos Almeida, 'Entre gente "aspra e dura" – advertências de um missionário no Congo e Angola (1713–1723)', *Revista lusófona de ciência das religiões*, 13–14, 2008, 463–483; Roquinaldo Amaral Ferreira, *Cross-cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade*, Cambridge, 2012, 166–203; John Thornton, 'Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbundu Areas, 1500–1700', in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood, Cambridge, 2002, 71–90; Jean Nsondè, 'Christianisme et religion traditionnelle en pays koongo aux XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 32: 128, 1992, 705–711; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 8–19; Wyatt MacGaffey, 'Precolonial Beliefs in God, Nzambi, and Chthonic Beings: Evidence from Kongo Texts', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 52, 2022, 1–21; Kalle Kananoja, 'Healers, Idolaters, and Good Christians: A Case Study of Creolization and Popular Religion in Mid-eighteenth Century Angola', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 43: 3 2010, 443–465.  
 43 On the role of 'continuous revelation' in Kongo Christianity, see John Thornton, 'African Traditional Religion and Christianity in the Formation of Vodun', *Slavery & Abolition*, 43: 4, 2022, 730–757. On Kongo scepticism about hell, see Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 91–92.  
 44 *Proceso ordinario*, Sacabuche, 270r–v. This punitive element was also incorporated into another frequently used painting in Claver's mission – that of a beautiful black man being baptised by a Jesuit. In the painting, the 'very beautiful' black man being baptised is juxtaposed with a group of 'very ugly blacks' being tortured by demons. This painting served as a backdrop to the altar Claver constructed to perform baptisms for enslaved black men and women in Cartagena. For an analysis of the painting, see Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, chapter 4, and Brewer-García, 'Imagined Transformations'.  
 45 This 'faithful copy' was rendered in Alejandro Salas in 1879. See Susan Rocha Ramírez, *Los imaginarios sociales sobre el infierno en la pintura de Hernando de la Cruz*, 1629, Master's Thesis, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Sede Ecuador, 2013, 7. Rocha Ramírez mentions an almost identical painting in a church of the town of Tabacundo, north-west of Quito. José Luis Mico Buchón, *La Iglesia de la Compañía de Quito*, Quito, 2003, suspects that the Tabacundo painting is an original work by Hernando de la Cruz. See also Carmen Fernandez and Alexandra Kennedy, 'El ciudadano virtuoso y patriota: Notas sobre la visualidad del siglo XIX en Ecuador', in *Ecuador: Tradición y modernidad*, ed. Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales and Víctor Mínguez, Madrid, 2007, 45–52, 46; and Rodrigo Miró, *El hermano Hernando de la Cruz y su significación en la pintura quiteña*, Panama City, 1966.  
 46 *Proceso ordinario*, José Monzolo, 543r.  
 47 Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*, Madrid, 1611, I, 6r.  
 48 *Proceso ordinario*, Andrés Sacabuche, 270v.  
 49 *Proceso ordinario*, Monzolo, 543r.  
 50 The nineteenth sermon in *Tercer catechismo y exposicion de la doctrina christiana, por sermones para que los curas y otros ministros prediquen y enseñen a los*

- yndios y a las demas personas, Lima, 1585, offers a script for missionaries in Peru to explain the differences between religious images adorning Christian churches and their referents. Alonso de Sandoval recommends that missionaries and interpreters teach catechumens to feel or at least perform feeling pain for their past sins in the act of contrition (Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada*, book 3, chapter 2, 279r–280r). See also Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, 172.
- 51 Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds*, Washington, DC, 1981, 167–169.
- 52 This nkisi was taken from the Kongo in the late nineteenth century by colonial agent, merchant, and photographer Robert Visser. Another example of the gesture is the ivory sceptre finial in the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom, inv. UEA 252.
- 53 For spitting as a ritual technique in early modern central Africa, see Calogero Piazza, 'Giuseppe da Modena, Missionario al Soyo (1713–1716)', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 50, 1980, 385–471, 452–453; Parma Watercolors, Virgili Collection, 88; Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi and Fortunato Alamandini, *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba et Angola situati nell' Etiopia inferiore occidentale e delle missioni apostoliche esercitate da religiosi capuccini*, Bologna, 1687, 97. For spitting in west central Africa in the twentieth century, see Wyatt MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture: The Conceptual Challenge of the Particular*, Bloomington, 2000, 106. In his brief description of the west central African kingdom of Loango, Alonso de Sandoval explains that the inhabitants are idolaters and are greatly insulted when Portuguese spit in the presence of their gods (*Naturaleza, policia sagrada*, book I, chapter 15).
- 54 See entries for 'decor', 'formositas', 'pulchritudo', 'dignor', 'felicitet', 'recte', 'bene', in *Vocabularium*. Mhote appears in definitions for good deed, contentment, material good, good, beauty in J. J. Descourvières and R. F. Cuénot, *Dictionnaire français et congo*, 74, 78.
- 55 Cardoso uses the form 'üöte' in the *Doutrina Christa*, 15v, 32r, 38r.
- 56 Other witnesses who testify in the inquest mention Claver's use of images of hell in books of prints made of engraved images. Cartagena resident Bartolomeo de Torres, for example, describes 'a small book of many stamps, and one in particular that represented hell and a damned soul that endured penance there with some demons around it' (*Proceso ordinario*, 95v).
- 57 On this iconography in the Andes, see Cohen Suarez [Aponte], *Heaven, Hell*; Ramón Mujica Pinilla, 'Hell in the Andes: The Last Judgment in the Art of Viceroyal Peru', in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, ed. Ilona Katzew et al., New Haven, 2011, 177–201; Teresa Gisbert and Andrés de Mesa, 'Los grabados, el "Juicio Final" y la idolatría indígena en el mundo andino', in *Entre cielos e infiernos: Memoria del V Encuentro Internacional sobre Barroco*, Pamplona, 2011, 17–42; Carl Henrik Langebaek Rueda, 'Experiencias oníricas, el más allá y el purgatorio en la Nueva Granada: La demonización de las entrañas americanas y la conversión de los indios', *Boletín de historia y antigüedades*, 99: 855, 2012, 251–306. For more examples from Quito and New Granada, see Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, ed., *The Art of Painting in Colonial Quito*, Philadelphia, 2012, 134 and 136.
- 58 See, for example, Cohen-Suarez [Aponte], *Heaven, Hell*; Agustina Rodríguez Romero and Gabriela Siracusano, 'El pintor, el cura, el grabador, el cardenal, el rey, y la muerte. Los rumbos de una imagen del Juicio Final en el siglo XVII', *Eadem Utraque Europa*, 6: 10–11, 2010, 9–29.
- 59 Sacristan Nicolás González testifies in the inquest for Claver that two painters painted Claver's portrait in Cartagena after his death: lieutenant Don Alonso de la Torre and Juan Pérez de Miranda. *Proceso ordinario*, Nicolás González, 155v.
- 60 Cohen Suarez [Aponte], *Heaven, Hell*, 58. Teresa Gisbert, *El paraíso de los pájaros parlantes: La imagen del otro en la cultura andina*, La Paz, 1999, 101–116.
- 61 Adrián Contreras-Guerrero, *In ligno facta: Artes escultóricas de los siglos XVII y XVIII en Colombia*, Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Granada, 2018, chapter 6, 196–227. See also Aaron M. Hyman, *Rubens in Repeat: The Logic of the Copy in Colonial Latin America*, Los Angeles, 2021; Stephanie Porras, *The First Viral Images: Maerten de Vos, Antwerp Print, and the Early Modern Globe*, University Park, 2023.
- 62 See, among others, Daan van Heesch, 'Imagining Hieronymus Bosch in Colonial Peru: Foreign Sources, Indigenous Responses', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 39: 4 2017, 351–369; Jean Michel Massing, 'Jerome Nadal's *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* and the Birth of Global Imagery', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 60, 2017, 161–220. See also José de Mesa, 'La influencia de Flandes en la pintura del area andina', *Revista de Historia de América*, 117, 1994, 61–82; Carolyn Dean, 'Copied Carts: Spanish Prints and Colonial Peruvian Paintings', *Art Bulletin*, 78: 1, 1996, 98–110. For a database of paintings made in Spanish colonial territories from European engravings, see the PESSCA archive.
- 63 Gabriela Siracusano, *La paleta del espanto: Color y cultura en los cielos e infiernos de la pintura colonial andina*, San Martín, 2010.
- 64 *Proceso ordinario*, Ignacio Angola, 522r–523r.
- 65 On the voyage, see Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*.
- 66 See Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, 165–67. For mentions of Claver visiting slave ships, see *Proceso ordinario*, Francisco Jolofo, 656r–v. among others.
- 67 Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada*, book I, chapter 18, 71r–72v.
- 68 Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada*, book I, chapter 18, 72v.
- 69 Lorenzo da Lucca and Filippo da Firenze, 'Relazioni d'alcuni Missionari Capp:ni Toscani singolarmente del P. Lorenzo da Lucca che due volte fù Miss:io Apotol:co al Congo. Parte Seconda [1700–1717]', *Archivio Provinciale dei Frati Minori Cappuccini della Provincia di Toscana*. Florence, Montughi Convent, 516, 347–348.
- 70 On purgatory, see Edward Hanna, 'Purgatory', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 12, New York, 1911. Accessed 26 June 2023, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>>.
- 71 On the Biblical idea of hell as an abyss or an underground place within Earth, see Numbers 16:31–35; Psalm 54:16 (Douai-Rheims); Isaiah 5:14; Ezekiel 26:20; Philippians 2:10.
- 72 On the Marie-Séraphique and its images, see Bertrand Guillet, *La Marie-Séraphique, navire négrier*, Nantes, 2009.
- 73 The variation of the plan of the slave ship Brooks with the inset vignette 'Representation of an Insurrection on Board a Slave Ship' (<https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/16166138>) demonstrates that the dichotomy of the hold and the deck was sometimes interrupted by instances of insurrection among the enslaved. On imagery related to the Brooks, see Cheryl Finley, *Committed to Memory: The Art of the Slave Ship Icon*, Princeton, 2018.
- 74 Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada*, book I, chapter 18, 73v.
- 75 See the 1627 description of these two-storey houses and balconies by Fray Pedro Simón in *Noticias historiales*, cited in Germán Téllez Castañeda, 'Notas sobre la arquitectura civil en Cartagena en el siglo XVII', in *Cartagena de Indias en el siglo XVII*, Cartagena, 2007, 131–154, 134–135.
- 76 See, for example, the common pattern of estimates of the black population in Cartagena juxtaposed to descriptions of evangelical efforts among them in Jesuit annual reports from the seventeenth century in *Cartas anuas de la provincial del Nuevo Reino de Granada, años 1604 a 1621*, ed. José del Rey Fajardo and Alberto Gutiérrez, Bogotá, 2015: 'Carta anua de la viceprovincia del Nuevo Reino y Quito (1604–1605), no. 1', 136–137; 'Carta anua de la viceprovincia del Nuevo Reino y Quito (1604–1605), no. 2', 169–170; 'Letras anuas de la viceprovincia de Quito y el Nuevo Reino de los años de 1608 y 1609, no. 3', 242–245 and 249; 'Letras anuas 1611–12, no. 4', 340–349; 'Carta anua 1615, no. 5', 469–471; 'Carta anua 1619–1621, no. 6', 578–579. Claver himself claimed the implausibly high number of 300,000 souls, as reported by Nicolás González in his testimony in the beatification inquest, *Proceso ordinario*, Nicolás González, 59v–61r.
- 77 For an analysis of the interpreters' descriptions of the physical torments, especially the smells, of captivity in the barracoons in Cartagena, see Brewer-García, 'Los olores fétidos de la salvación: Esclavitud, santidad y discurso sensorial en la Cartagena de Indias del siglo XVII', *Cuadernos de Literatura del Caribe e Hispanoamérica*, in press.
- 78 *Proceso ordinario*, José Monzolo, 539r–v. A version of this citation, in its translation into Italian printed in 1696, was also quoted in John Thornton, 'Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60: 2, 2003: 273–294, 273.
- 79 *Proceso ordinario*, Sacabuche, 264v–265r. Their colleague interpreter from Senegambia Francisco Jolofo also reports the same fear of new arrivals although he omits mentioning whether he had believed it himself (*Proceso ordinario*, Francisco Jolofo, 656r). See also *Proceso ordinario*, Isabel Folupa, 623v.
- 80 Capuchin Andrea da Pavia reports a similar belief among central

- Africans that Europeans stole them to make oil from their bodies and cheese from their brains. See Carlo Toso, *Viaggio apostolico Andrea da Pavia*, Rome, 2000, 169.
- 81 Voltaire, *Candide*, Paris, 1759, chapter XIX.
- 82 Cécile Fromont, 'Common Threads: Cloth, Colour, and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Kongo and Angola', *Art History*, 41: 5, 2018, 838–867, 861–864; Ingrid Greenfield, 'Crocodile Tears: Collecting and Colonial Expansion in the Renaissance', unpublished lecture. On African ivory in the early modern Atlantic world, see Vanicléia Silva Santos, *O marfim no mundo moderno: Comércio, circulação, fé e status social (séculos XV–XIX)*, Curitiba, 2017; and Ezio Bassani, William Buller Fagg, Susan Mullin Vogel, and Carol Thompson, *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, 1988.
- 83 See also British Museum Inv. Af1867,0325.1.a; British Museum Af,+ 5929.
- 84 See British Museum Inv. Af1979,01.3156; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; Inv. No. 2006.51.192.
- 85 Frederick John Lamp, 'Ivory and Stone: Direct Connections between Sculptural Media along the Coast of Sierra Leone, 15th–16th centuries', *Afrique, Archéologie, Arts*, 16, 2020, 11–42.
- 86 On this tradition in Western Europe, see Robert Hughes, *Heaven and Hell in Western Art*, New York, 1968, part 3; Pamela Seingorn, "'Who Can Open the Doors of His Face?' The Iconography of the Hell Mouth', in *The Iconography of Hell*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Thomas H. Seiler, Kalamazoo, 1992; Gary Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell: Eighth-century Britain to the Fifteenth*, Selinsgrove, PA, 1995. On Byzantine imagery, see Rembrandt Duits, 'Hell in the Byzantine World', in *A History of Art and Religion in Venetian Crete and the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou, Cambridge, 2020, 191–234.
- 87 See also William D. Piersen, 'White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear, Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide Among New Slaves', *Journal of Negro History*, 62: 2, 1977, 147–159; John Thornton, 'Cannibals, Witches'; Jared Staller, *Converging on Cannibals: Terrors of Slaving in Atlantic Africa, 1509–1670*, Athens, OH, 2019; Manuel Barcia, 'White Cannibalism in the Illegal Slave Trade: The Peculiar Case of the Portuguese Schooner *Arrogante* in 1837', *New West Indian Guide*, 96, 2022, 1–28. On the cauldron, see Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Baton Rouge, 2006, 25–26; Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame*, Boston, 2005, 118; Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea Divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts*, London, 1705, 365.
- 88 *Proceso ordinario*, Nicolás González, 88r–v.
- 89 *Proceso ordinario*, Nicolás González, 88v.
- 90 Lisa Lowe, 'The Intimacies of Four Continents', in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Durham, NC, 2006, 191–212, 208.
- 91 Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', 1.