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SUE E. HOUCHINS AND BALTASAR FRA-MOLINERO, EDS. AND TRANS. *Black Bride of Christ. Chicaba, an African Nun in Eighteenth-Century Spain*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2018. 305 pp.

Rosalía Cornejo-Parriego 



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the cogito, the Kantian conception of law, and the incipient control society by engaging a radically different conception of time" (200); readers' resistance will be a "revolutionary intervention." On the penultimate page, Geraghty cites Guattari's notion that resistance to capitalism "requires the collective production of unpredictable and untamed "dissident subjectivities" rather than a mass movement of like-minded people" (211).

Even if this ultra-abstract form of resistance remains hard to imagine, the intellectual verve of this book does not. It contains very well written, brilliantly argued commentaries on the three writers, weaving them together in insightful and unexpected ways, aided by Geraghty's impressive command of the secondary criticism and expert knowledge of the Argentine political and cultural scene.

ADAM SHARMAN

University of Nottingham, UK

SUE E. HOUCHINS AND BALTAZAR FRA-MOLINERO, EDS. AND TRANS. *Black Bride of Christ. Chicaba, an African Nun in Eighteenth-Century Spain*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2018. 305 pp.

In *Black Bride of Christ*, Sue E. Houchins and Baltasar Fra-Molinero present the first English translation of the 1764 edition of the *Compendio de la vida ejemplar de la Venerable Madre Sor Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo*. *Vida* recounts the life story of the African nun Teresa Chicaba (c. 1676-1748), a former slave. According to the author, Juan Carlos Miguel de Paniagua, the narrative is based on Chicaba's poems and autobiographical writings, and the conversations the hagiographer and the nun shared. *Vida* became the foundational text in her beatification process.

The translation is preceded by an Introduction that is divided into two sections: "Context and Exposition of the *Vida*" and "Discussion of the *Vida* by Chapters." The Introduction provides historical information on the nun's African origins in La Mina Baja del Oro (West Africa) and the Ewe society, and her enslavement as a child. Then, it sheds light on her life in Madrid in the household of the Marquis of Mancera, her rejection by several convents due to her race, her initial marginal position in the convent of *La Penitencia* in Salamanca, and her subsequent fame as a miracle worker. In addition, it explores the intertextual connections of Paniagua's *Vida* within an Afro-diasporic framework to elucidate the complexity and hybridity of this text. *Vida* not only depicts the nun's dual African and European background, but also displays characteristics of the hagiographic genre and the as-told-to slave narrative.

Hagiographies recounted the life of holy people with the goal of inspiring the audience, and, in Chicaba's case, to provide evidence for her canonization. In this regard, *Vida* follows the conventions of spiritual narratives in a context where certain female religious experiences were considered suspicious. Tracing the intertextual dialogues of Chicaba's life story, the editors recall the doubts (particularly about their literacy) that religious women, such as eighteenth-century Afro-Brazilian Rosa Egipciaca and nineteenth-century African American Rebecca Cox Jackson, endured. This leads Houchins and Fra-Molinero to address another fundamental concern regarding hagiographical writings (and slave narratives) by and about women but recorded and mediated by men. Can readers really hear the voice of these women? Are we listening to the voice of the informant (Chicaba) or only that of the author (Paniagua)? Ultimately, it seems impossible to separate Chicaba and Paniagua's voices in a text that, for the editors, is defined by its collaborative nature, and demands the development of methodologies and reading strategies able to approach "the complexity of eighteenth-century Spanish society's discursive construction of the Catholic African female" (9).

Moreover, as the Introduction contends, hagiographic writings not only illuminate an individual's life, but also the values of a culture. *Vida* might not offer a fully accurate account of Chicaba's life, but it certainly reveals the European vision of Africa and casts light on the institution of slavery in Spain, as well as on the politics and structure of women's religious orders. It is noteworthy how Paniagua (re)writes the nun's African origins to make her a fitting candidate for sainthood. Her homeland, an imagined kingdom, is fashioned according to standards of a European monarchy, and her family, contrary to historical evidence, follows the model of a Western monogamous and patriarchal nuclear family. Paniagua's underlying argument, the editors claim, is that, despite being African, Chicaba belonged to a civilized nation and family but was surrounded by savages requiring extraction from that environment. The combination of theological principles and a racial ideology consumed by the concept of *limpieza de sangre* precluded a Black slave from sainthood. Paniagua had to construct a narrative of exceptionality to represent her uncontaminated by Africanness. Nevertheless, as the miraculous post-mortem transformation of Chicaba's pigmentation from black to white demonstrates white superiority, and the association of skin colour with morality never disappears in the text.

Additionally, Houchins and Fra-Molinero explore the commonalities between slave and spiritual narratives, and autobiographies of Protestant African American women and the life story of the Catholic nun. They note in *Vida* the paradox of envisioning enslavement as a means of liberation from paganism and barbarism and a path to Christian redemption. In the face of

slavery, the redemptive power of suffering, always emphasized in hagiographies, adopts a new dimension. Cruelty is rationalized “as the means by which a chosen few emulate Christ’s suffering and achieve sainthood” (75). Consequently, not only does enslavement become a path to salvation, but the perpetrators of racist incidents are also absolved from blame. Under these circumstances, it is highly telling that Spain’s black *cofradías*, as the editors remind us, had to express gratitude in their written constitutions for the acquisition of Catholicism through enslavement.

Despite acknowledging that hagiographies represent a life that conforms to the hegemonic ideology, the Introduction focuses on some scenes in *Vida* that point towards a counter-discourse of resistance that some Black audiences might have been able to detect. Indeed, as Houchings and Fra-Molinero accurately state, *Vida* contains instances of a double discourse on slavery: while it takes Chicaba to the land of salvation, it involves profound terror and trauma. Furthermore, the Christian household where she develops spiritually is also a space of violence and sexual abuse.

This volume is enriched by several images (e.g., the official portrait of Sor Teresa Chicaba [c. 1749], an autograph letter, the required printing permissions from ecclesiastical authorities) and Appendices that comprise the Letter of Payment, Act of Profession, and Obituary of Chicaba, as well as the Last Will of the Marchioness of Mancera. My only objection is that the Introduction and Notes would have benefitted from more careful editing to avoid content repetition. The Notes contain a wealth of information that will be an invaluable resource for researchers, myself included, but at times they seem excessive in terms of number and length.

Black Bride of Christ represents an excellent piece of research that will appeal to students and scholars in a variety of fields such as Religious, Gender, Afro-diasporic, Iberian, and Africana Studies. It presents a translation mindful of context (i.e., racially charged terms) and a sharp and nuanced analysis of the textual intricacies. Though exploring intertextual connections and locating *Vida* within the African Diaspora, the editors also affirm their belief in the fragmented and contextual nature of diasporic experiences and their lack of uniformity. Finally, they illustrate in a fascinating manner the intersection of religious, political, and racial discourses in the construction of the female Black body in eighteenth-century Spain and invite us to continue research “on the African diasporic sisters still hidden in monastic annals” (37).

ROSALÍA CORNEJO-PARRIEGO
University of Ottawa