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Nancy E. van Deusen, ed. *The Souls of Purgatory: The Spiritual Diary of a Seventeenth-Century Peruvian Mystic, Ursula de Jesus.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. x + 221 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8263-2827-4; $26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8263-2828-1.

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Nancy E. van Deusen's work is a welcome addition to the swelling body of literature concerning early modern female spiritual autobiographical writings. Her intent, outlined in her acknowledgements, was to produce a transcription, translation, and scholarly introduction for the original diary of Ursula de Jesus, a seventeenth-century *donadas* in the Convent of Santa Clara, Lima. This is where the worth of Van Deusen's book lies. She has indeed transcribed and translated substantial excerpts of the original text and placed firmly the document within its historical context. Van Deusen should be congratulated for obtaining permission from the Order of the Poor Clares to publish these lengthy extracts since they will be of great interest to their academic audience.

While women's spiritual autobiographical writings from the early modern period are always regarded with interest, Ursula de Jesus' diary is a particularly fascinating document. Ursula (1604-66) was a black woman who began life as a slave but later became a freewoman of color and a *donadas* in a convent of the Poor Clares in Lima. She became an acknowledged mystic noted for her visions and communications with God; approached by souls in purgatory wishing to speed their progress to heaven, Ursula became a purgatorial intercessor. Black religious women are obscure figures in history, particularly in colonial history, but are now emerging in an increasingly active area of scholarship. To have moved from a position of slavery to the status of a mystic rendered Ursula notable to her contemporaries and also an engaging historical figure. Her diary is a typical spiritual autobiographical account of its time but it stands out for its reflection of Ursula's incongruous identity as a gifted holy woman and a slave. Indeed, her account is only one of a handful of known biographical accounts of a woman of color. This work is thus of interest to historians of religion, women, and race as well as literary scholars.

Part 1 of Van Deusen's work vividly brings to life the historical context in which we find Ursula de Jesus. This is an excellent introduction to the religious life and social experiences of black women in seventeenth-century Lima. Here Van Deusen also explores the significance of Ursula's role as an intercessor and where we can locate her in the medieval and early modern feminine spiritual tradition. Thus part 1 of this work comfortably guides the reader through the transcript and translation of the diary.

Ursula de Jesus's diary was committed to paper from 1650 onwards, at the behest of her confessor, the Jesuit Miguel Salazar. While Van Deusen does not dwell on this fact, Ursula's diary illustrates the frequent collaboration between confessors and celebrated women religious in the seventeenth century. It is only in recent years that this active collaboration has become a source of interest for historians of religion who now argue that the increasingly powerful confessors of the post-Tridentine age drew on the help of prominent holy women to further their careers and develop exemplar models of feminine piety. An exploration of the relationship between Ursula and Salazar would no doubt be an interesting study.

As an example of an early modern spiritual autobiography, Ursula de Jesus's diary conforms to the conventions of the genre. Van Deusen pertinently notes that the diary illustrates the universality of these guidelines. Ursula was careful to express that she wrote not under her own initiative but under the direction of her confessor, since it was necessary to express subservience to male authority. The account of her spiritual development also conforms to the genre. She identified an epiphany or a "St. Paul on the road to Damascus" type moment when she first felt her spiritual awakening. For Ursula, this moment was a near escape from a fatal fall; she was saved, she believed, by the intercession of the Virgin of Carmen. She later received a sign from God that she must dedicate her life to his service when the convent chapel caught fire. Her subsequent novitiate experience is described in terms of exceptional piety and self motivation.

Ultimately, in 1666 Ursula suffered a "good death" and died as though in a state of ecstasy (p. 5). Thus, Ursula's diary recounts her life in accordance with typical narrative structures of contemporary hagiographies.

However, conformity does not reduce the scope for the individuality of the author to shine through the text. Indeed, Van Deusen notes that female writers had to use accepted literary techniques, or "stratagems of the strong" such as subservience and humility to enable them to air their own opinions (p. 51). Moreover, it is the particularities rather than the conformities of Ursula de Jesus's diary that make it an engaging read. Van Deusen explores in convincing depth the ways in which Ursula's diary departs from standard hagiographic works from Europe and Latin America. Ursula's multifaceted identity as an African-Peruvian woman, a slave, a freedwoman, and a religious servant in an enclosed community all shape her diary accounts. Seventeenth-century Lima experienced the same profound spiritual renaissance and feminization of piety that we see in parts of contemporary Europe. Women of color who tapped into this movement could gain the opportunity for notoriety and empowerment. This was indeed the experience of Ursula who was later compared to other noteworthy blacks such as the Queen of Sheba and celebrated visionaries. Ursula's painful experience of a society dominated by racism and hierarchy informed many of her narrative choices. For example, her visions were often concerned with race and race relations. Ursula's visions expressed her belief that while the mortal world was one of inequality, all souls were ultimately equal before God. The souls that appeared to her were both black and white and indicated that purgatory was a place where distinctions of race, class, and gender were expunged.

Van Deusen's work has brought to light a fascinating historical character whose autobiographical writings impact upon many different areas of academic research. My only criticism of the book is that its scholarly introduction could have been an academic study in its own right. For me, the work raises unanswered questions, as all thought-provoking studies do: What was Ursula's relationship with her confessor? How well known was Ursula beyond the convent? To what extent did her male superiors take the orthodoxy of her visions seriously?- How widely were the diary and subsequent biographies written by her male superiors circulated, and for what purpose and with what effect? Van Deusen has made available a fascinating source that will be of great use in subsequent research.

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