

of thought obsolete, though Nicholls seems reluctant to take that view either. At any rate, there is clearly more work to do to fully understand the political thought of this period.

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Larissa Brewer-García. *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 321. Hb, \$99.99.

In the last decade, scholars of Colonial Latin America have increasingly turned their focus to the role of translators and intermediaries in the production of knowledge for and about native populations. Less studied, however, has been the role Black interpreters and mediators played in contesting and creating notions and discourses of blackness. Partly, this is a reflection of the archive itself. Unlike Indigenous languages that were studied and described by Spanish missionaries and for which a rich corpus of grammars, vocabularies, and sermon collections (among other genres) survive, no equivalent linguistic efforts were carried out by priests in regard to the different languages spoken by those who survived the Middle Passage. Larissa Brewer-García's *Beyond Babel* aims to cover this gap. By focusing on archival material—particularly the Jesuit *litterae annuae* and the beatification inquest of Pedro Claver—Brewer-García brings to the fore the lives and works of several enslaved Black interpreters working for the Jesuits in Cartagena and Lima. The book highlights how, occupying an intermediary space between the authority of the priests and their lack of knowledge of African languages, they adopted a position of interpretive authority that allowed them to redefine notions of blackness, in particular, black beauty, and black virtue. The reading of the spiritual diary of Úrsula de Jesús, a freed Black woman who took vows at Lima's Convent of Santa Clara, and whose role as a mystic and spiritual mediator led to the writing of two anonymous hagiographies of her in the seventeenth century, allows Brewer-García to probe how the conceptualization of blackness born out of the work of Black interpreters in Cartagena circulated throughout the Peruvian viceroyalty.

Beyond Babel is comprised of five chapters. Chapter One analyzes the different stereotypes about Black people that circulated in Iberian culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Brewer-García identifies three kinds of

representations of blackness: the so-called *bozal*, which appeared mainly in literary works, especially in *villancicos*, a popular poetic genre. *Bozal* referred to the (supposed) inability to communicate in Iberian languages on the part of Black individuals. The stereotype was usually employed in poetry to comedic effects. Brewer-García localizes this trope about Black people on the human continuum developed by Renaissance humanists, in which eloquence was considered the foremost expression of reason. Thus, Black people were not excluded from humanity, but instead included in the lower end of its continuum, through a self-reinforcing bias: They were perceived to be irrational because they could not speak well; while their lack of eloquence was assumed to reflect their lack of reason. The second discursive representation of Black individuals analyzed in this chapter are the Black persons of the legal ordinances, which emphasized the need to tame Black unruly bodies by meting out physical punishments, restricting their movements, and limiting their access to rights and status. The third discursive type presented an exception to this conceptualization of blackness that emphasized undisciplined bodies instead of reason. In missionary texts, Black catechumens appear as endowed of the same potentiality for reason than other human beings. This was, of course, due to evangelical and practical reasons: In order to sustain a catechetical program, it must be assumed that the catechumens can understand what is being taught to them. Crucially, it was this conceptualization of blackness that would be upheld and amplified by Black interpreters.

Chapter Two delves deeper into the missionary and evangelical strategies used to minister the enslaved persons arriving at Cartagena. Given her focus on the work of Jesuit missionaries, Brewer-García convincingly argues that the methods used to catechize Black, in particular the translation policies applied to the work of Black interpreters, must be seen against the backdrop of the equivalent policies set for the evangelization of native communities. Unlike the latter, the evangelization of those who survived the Middle Passage required the validation of Black interpreters, for the Jesuits never devoted themselves to learning African languages nor was there a comparable effort to standardize the dialects spoken by their catechumens, as it did happen in Peru and Nueva Granada with the Quechua, Aymara, and, to a lesser degree, Muisca languages. As a consequence, Black interpreters gained an unparalleled influence over the translation of Christian doctrine.

The activities of these interpreters are the focus of Chapter Three. In it, through careful use of archival documentation, Brewer-García introduces us to several Black interpreters and mediators active in Cartagena in the early to mid-seventeenth century. Interpreters such as Calepino, Andrés Sacabuche, or María de Mendoza took advantage of the space of

negotiation provided by the translation policies and methods endorsed by the missionaries to acquire privileges both for themselves but also for the men and women arriving in dismal conditions to Cartagena. In effect, they acted as greeting and farewell committees, as the voice of Christian doctrine, as means of regular communication with the church and as occasional mediators in Inquisitorial and criminal trials. Black interpreters also played the role of confessors and consolers for those sentenced to death, and even as musicians who performed in funerary services for executed Black maroons. These roles, scrupulously documented by Brewer-García, show how, more than simply fitting into the patterns of racial violence brought upon by colonialism and slavery, Black interpreters could use the mission space to negotiate for themselves certain privileges in spite of their enslaved status, thus being able to become important resources for the newly arrived men and women coming from Africa. All this activity was based on the Black interpreters' linguistic competences, and Chapter Four explores how the language used by them helped produce new conceptualizations of the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of blackness. In particular, Brewer-García analyzes how they inverted the tropes of Black virtue and Black beauty prevalent in Western discourses. By using Black bodies as heuristic tools in their efforts to make sense of Christianity and of their reality as enslaved individuals, Black interpreters were able to locate virtues in their own corporality. The study of Sister Úrsula de Jesús's spiritual diary and of the hagiographies about her written after her death, allow Brewer-García to demonstrate how these reconceptualizations of Black virtue and beauty circulated and were applied elsewhere in the Peruvian Viceroyalty.

Beyond Babel is thus a welcomed addition to the growing literature of translation, interpretation, and mediation by non-Western actors in Spanish Latin America. It is a well-researched book that convincingly shows how Black interpreters were able to carve a space of authority for themselves, from where they could put in circulation alternative conceptions of blackness. *Beyond Babel* is an excellent example of how to uncover the life story and agency of those groups and individuals that have been rendered invisible in the archive. For the student of the Jesuits, the book will be most interesting for its keen reading of key Jesuit texts, such as Alonso de Sandoval's *De instauranda Aethiopia salute* (1627), the only systematic missiological treatise directly addressing the evangelization of African enslaved peoples. It will also be of interest for its vivid and detailed descriptions of the Jesuit evangelization methods in early modern Cartagena, the main port for the entry of African peoples into the Americas in the period.

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Giovanni Tarantino & Paola von Wyss-Giacosa. *Through Your Eyes: Religious Alterity and the Early Modern Western Imagination*. Leiden: Brill, 2021. Pp. xiii + 304. Hb, \$199.00.

There is no lack of cultural studies that investigate the question of the other, but the originality of this volume produced by Giovanni Tarantino (University of Florence) and Paola von Wyss-Giacosa (University of Zurich) is to focus on the question of the religious other, presenting a series of cases studies on the Western encounter with religious alterity. The encounters under investigation are limited to the early modern period (the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), that is, before the constitution of the sociology and anthropology of religion as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century. The studies are based on the writings of missionaries in Asia, for example, India, China, Siam (with the notable absence of Japan), and also on European works disseminating views of the religious other, seen mostly as a threat, but all the studies in this volume adopt the modern academic discourse of religious anthropology to analyze the complex motivations behind the descriptions of the religious other.

For the readers of the *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, three chapters are of special interest. Ananya Chakravarti (Georgetown University) offers a fascinating analysis of a few passages of the *Discourse on the Life of Christ* by the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens (1549–1619). The *Discourse* is written in old Marathi language, not with Marathi but Roman letters. Stephens adopted the classical style of poetry, which was used at that time by the Brahmins and which could allow the recitation of parts of the *Discourse* for the gatherings of the Catholic community at Salcete, near Goa, where Stephens was stationed from 1580 until his death. The *Discourse* was first printed in 1616. Stephens is certainly less known than Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), but the policy of accommodation undertaken by Stephens bears similarities with the policy of de Nobili in South India. However, as the title of the chapter—“Silencing the Other”—suggests, Chakravarti wants to point out Stephens’s limitations in engaging with the