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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

religious other. Indeed, the *Discourse* tells the story of humanity and of Israel based on the Old Testament, and then it narrates the life of Christ, but the narration in verses is embedded between the questions of a Brahmin catechumen and the answers of a Jesuit priest. Chakravarti focuses her analysis on two sections of the *Discourse*, the condemnation of idolatry at Babel, and the birth of Christ in chapter 1 of the Gospel of Luke, showing in both cases the ambiguous role of silence. Concerning the passage related to Babel, the *Discourse* makes a serious attempt to present the Hindu argumentation for polytheism according to which all the individual gods submit finally to a supreme deity. Same as it is legitimate to bride king's servants, it is also legitimate to make offerings to lower gods, and this does not imply any dishonor towards the supreme deity. However, in his response, the Jesuit priest reframes the relationship between the supreme and lower deities in terms of a radical opposition, and he makes the latter the followers of Satan. When the Brahmin catechumen remarks that some Hindu enlightened sages advise against giving offerings to lower deities, and then asks whether this path would be possible, the Jesuit priest's answer is very terse, and dismisses altogether the possibility of a Hindu monotheist path. Chakravarti sees here a first instance of silencing the other. A second instance occurs in the gospel of Luke, but here the inquisitive Brahmin catechumen is made silent by the birth of Christ: "The birth of the savior Jesus—hearing this miracle, my mind was filled with bliss; that is why among us no question was asked" (61). Chakravarti interprets this silencing as a gesture of submission to the Christian faith, and she contrasts the silencing at work in the *Discourse* with a contemporary text in Marathi language in which the debate between a Muslim and a Brahmin ends with a very different kind of silence as "a mutual understanding and a willingness to coexist between religious others, who remain religious others" (64). On the contrary, in the *Discourse*, such tolerance is not allowed.

I think that Chakravarti indicates here a real obstacle for Stephens and the Jesuits of that time. They could not accept the omnipresence of Hindu gods and their religious rituals. But I believe that Stephens could have intellectually appreciated the suggestion of a Hindu monotheism, because his Scholastic training would have likely enabled him to engage into a metaphysical discussion in which he could have developed a more inclusive approach to Hindu metaphysics. Therefore, if Stephens would have had the chance in engaging in the metaphysical debate with the Muslim and the Brahmin, he would have probably ended with the same silence of mutual understanding. However, the stumbling block for Stephens was polytheistic worship, and he did not have the theological tools, which only started to be developed in the second half of the twentieth century, to engage into a true religious dialogue. Therefore, it

is important here to distinguish between two forms of tolerance towards the religious other: a tolerance and mutual acceptance at the metaphysical level in front of a truth that goes beyond any form of revelation, and a tolerance of polytheistic worship.

In Chapter 4, Paola von Wyss-Giacosa investigates how the Paduan scholar and antiquary Lorenzo Pignoria (1571–1631) collected objects and images to document in his works the evidence of idolatry in the world. In 1605, he published a work on the ancient idols of Egypt. In 1615, in *True and New Images*, he presented a visual history of idolatry, adopting euhemerism, according to which mythological accounts are presumed to have originated from real historical events. Pignoria documents the origin of idolatry not at Babel or Babylon, but in Egypt. With the expansion of Egypt, idolatry disseminated in both directions, reaching Western Indies (i.e., the Americas) and Oriental Indies (i.e., Asia). Pignoria holds that the people of both Indies produced idols by following the imagery of the Egyptian gods “so exactly that there is nothing more that needs to be added” (112). He inserted in his works drawings that were sent from the Indies to Rome and given to him by the Jesuits. However, certain drawings about Asian idols are based solely on verbal descriptions from Jesuit reports. For example, from a report from Japan depicting Kannon, Pignoria fabricated a drawing of Kannon with eighteen arms attached to the middle part of the body, and seven heads inserted in the breast. Pignoria rejects those images of deities as idols, and he mentions his personal irritation towards them. If he finds some elements resembling to Christianity in the idols of Asia, for example the halo surrounding the head of Kannon or Guanyin, he interprets this in a negative way, as a trick of Satan to induce people into superstitions through a superficial resemblance with the true religion. However, Wyss-Giacosa notices a shift in Pignoria’s work while presenting fifteen idols from Japan: his description is limited to the external appearance, the material, and the coloring. Not only does he abandon any attempt of establishing a comparison with the idols of Egypt, but he even notices “the dignified reverence of the figure and a certain devotion that emanates from it” (130). The halo around the head of the idols is then interpreted as the lingering presence of the true religion before people had fallen into idolatry. According to Wyss-Giacosa, Pignoria’s shift of method and attitude towards the idols suggests a growing doubt in him about the value of the idols, and this may explain why he did not pursue further his method of comparing the idols.

I find the analysis of Wyss-Giacosa quite pertinent since it shows the ambiguity for scholars with Christian faith in studying what they consider idolatry. Indeed, they indirectly engage in rationalizing and legitimizing idolatry. I would like to stress here the mutual dependence between Pignoria and the

Jesuits, indicating a common intellectual milieu in the middle of the seventeenth century in Italy. Indeed, Wyss-Giacosa found evidence that Pignoria inspired the famous Jesuit and polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) in his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1652), where he claimed evidence from the artefacts of the Indies for the existence of a common idolatry that originated historically from Egypt. Wyss-Giacosa does not mention the *China illustrata* (1666), but in this work, Kircher continues the method of Pignoria of fabricating drawings based on the narrations of fellow Jesuits. For example, based on the written description by the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini (1614–61), in his *New Chinese Atlas* (1655), of a certain Buddha Stone Mountain in the province of Fujian, Kircher fabricated the drawing of a mountain with a human shape. Certainly, the locals in Fujian as well as Martini would have been very much surprised to see how the Buddha Stone Mountain was represented in the drawing of Kircher, but this shows the great role of imagination in the European scholars and readers to fill up their visual representation of the other.

In Chapter 5, entitled “The Religious Other as Perceived by the Chinese and the Early Western Missionaries,” the well-known Australian sinologist Paul Rule argues for a fluid use of the concept of other in the encounter of Christianity with China in the late Ming and early Qing dynasty. In doing so, Rule expresses a strong dissatisfaction with the analysis of Jacques Gernet who had developed in his *Chine et Christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982) the idea of a fundamental incompatibility between Chinese and Western cultures, having construed China as complete otherness. For Gernet, communication between the missionaries and the Chinese was flawed with fundamental misunderstandings on both sides because the linguistic structures of the Chinese and Western languages are radically different. In contrast, and similarly to Erik Zürcher, Nicolas Standaert and many other researchers in the last two decades, Paul Rule strives to display the complex interactions between the Jesuit missionaries and the Chinese. Instead of focusing, like Gernet, on the writings of the opponents to Christianity, Rule focuses on the writings of the Jesuit missionaries and the Confucian Christians. The case of the Fujian *literatus* Li Jiugong (d.1681) and of his *Meditations* (*Shensi*) exhibits a high degree of integration between two traditions, where Christianity is not a completely new religion, but a renewal and extension of China’s ancient heritage, with new imports, like the love of others and the awareness of sin, and the rejection of some aspects of Chinese society, like the treatment of women (concubinage, female infanticide, widow suicide). As Rule says, Li Jiugong “was clearly a thoughtful man who reached a strong personal commitment as a Christian, and his life and works are a standing rebuke to any simplistic account of an insurmountable otherness of Christianity” (163). Concerning the missionaries, Rule argues that they were

changed or converted, not in the sense of abandoning their faith, but there was a conversion from a narrow to a broader Christianity, so that “the religious other ceases to be other not so much by being assimilated to the missionary but when the missionary is understood and accepted by the missioned, that is, when they inhabit their world” (165).

As the chapter of Paul Rule suggests, the cultural and religious encounter between China and the West in the late Ming and early Qing presents a rare case of the successful transformations of the self through the other when the perception of a radical difference is overcome. However, we should not forget that some aspects of Chinese culture, like the rituals towards the ancestors, became for some missionaries an insurmountable obstacle, and on the other side, the rejection of the ritual towards the ancestors was perceived as an unacceptable offense by the conservative elite. The limitations on both sides in engaging with the other led to the ostracization of Christianity in China.

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Linda Carol Jones. *The Shattered Cross: French Catholic Missionaries on the Mississippi River, 1698–1725*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020. Pp. 296. Hb, \$50.00.

Linda Carol Jones has written a carefully designed and empathetically executed study of five missionaries from the Séminaire de Québec, a Roman Catholic community of priests founded in 1663 by New France's first bishop, François de Laval. The five missionaries—Fathers Foucault, Bergier, de Montigny, Saint-Cosme, and Davion—labored between 1698 and 1725 among Indigenous peoples of the Mississippi Valley, including the Tamarois, Tunicas, Tanekas, Natchez, and Quapaws. Jones takes seriously the missionaries' purposes and labors while also illuminating the social and spiritual worlds of the Native peoples, worlds the missionaries signally failed to transform.

Jones artfully pieces together archival sources (many of which are lists of goods and supplies or *lettres patentes*) from Canada, France, and Italy along with the Archives du Séminaire de Québec in order to reveal the five missionaries' distinctive backgrounds and personalities both before their arrival in North America and during their years in the Mississippi Valley. This is a book