The party came to an end, not surprisingly, with the Bourbons, who finished off what Trent had begun. They undertook what Scott calls a "drastic reorganization of local religious life" (150) involving consolidation and severe cost cutting, essentially eliminating the *seroras* altogether. Men took over; though sacristans did not bring a dowry, as *seroras* did, they were "perceived as a better value for the price" (154). In 1769 the elimination of *seroras* was formalized in a royal order aimed at housecleaning and thrift.

But belying her statement that the Bourbons brought about the end of the vocation, Scott, who clearly loves the Basque towns she writes about, has managed to track down some survivors. In recent years the Spanish Catholic Church aggressively has sought to claim properties that over the centuries had drifted into secular hands. The most notable and scandalous example is the great mosque of Córdoba, but a more humble case was a Navarrese shrine, Nuestra Señora de Muskilda, which still had a *serora* in 2017. Scott was present at the trial after the town of Ochagavía sued to reclaim its shrine; the town won. As far as I can tell from Google, the diocese did not appeal, so at least one *serora* is still caring for a Basque shrine.

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*Truth in Many Tongues: Religious Conversion and the Languages of the Early Spanish Empire.* Daniel I. Wasserman-Soler.
University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020. xii + 228 pp. $84.95.

In 1567, Philip II banned the Moriscos of Granada from speaking or writing in Arabic. Moriscos were descendants of Muslims converted to Catholicism under coercion decades earlier, and this prohibition of their own language aimed to eradicate Morisco customs in order to achieve their full religious conversion. Yet, at the same time, the king did not ban Mesoamerican peoples from speaking their native languages as part of their evangelization by Catholic priests. In both cases, the Spanish monarchy and clergy understood there to be a strong connection between language and religious conversion. How can we make sense of their broad and sometimes contradictory range of opinions and strategies on these matters? In *Truth in Many Tongues*, Daniel I. Wasserman-Soler argues that the sixteenth-century Spanish Crown and church had no single, comprehensive policy to manage the use of languages throughout the peninsular kingdoms and overseas territories. He demonstrates how religious and secular authorities responded on a case-by-case basis to questions about which languages could be used, how, and by whom.

A remarkable level of linguistic diversity characterized Spanish-ruled territories in Iberia and around the globe in the sixteenth century, and religious conversion was central to Spanish imperial expansion. This book does not attempt to tell a complete history of language or conversion in the early modern Spanish context. It claims and achieves something much more specific: to illustrate the diversity of ecclesiastical opinions and royal directives pertaining to languages in relation to religious conversion in sixteenth-century Spain and New Spain. Wasserman-Soler uses reports and correspondence produced by officials of the Spanish Inquisition, clergy, and monarchy, including records of church councils, as well as various types of books and printed materials published during this era, to demonstrate this range of opinions and how they operated.

*Truth in Many Tongues* features many known debates, events, and figures, but reevaluates how their stories have been told. It dismantles assumptions about how sixteenth-century leaders in religion and government thought about language by explaining that there was rarely a clear-cut, two-way dispute between those for and against any particular linguistic approach. Language policies and debates reflected particular circumstances. Vernaculars—including Castilian, Valencian, and Arabic in Iberia, and Nahuatl, Otomi, and other Indigenous languages in New Spain—were often used temporarily by churchmen in order to provide religious education. The book's first chapter examines controversies over Castilian-language books censored by the Spanish Inquisition. The second and third chapters address the Morisco question, first in an examination of debates surrounding the Arabic language in Granada and then considering the push to teach Valencian to Moriscos. Chapters 4 and 5 investigate questions surrounding Indigenous languages and multilingualism in New Spain.

In paying close attention to sixteenth-century language strategies, this book sometimes loses sight of the broader histories of conversion—for example, the violence inherent in both coerced conversion and in attempts to stop people from speaking their own languages. This book could also do more to interrogate the limitations of the perspectives of the men at the center of this study—for instance, in their understanding of Indigenous religious beliefs and practices. While a major contribution of this study is its side-by-side assessment of Iberian and American contexts, most of the comparative analysis takes place in the book's conclusion; this section, however, at times underestimates how Spaniards drew connections between Moriscos and Indigenous peoples.

Multilingualism was common throughout the sixteenth-century Spanish world. People expected to hear and use different languages at home, in church, and in encounters with others; these included Arabic, Basque, Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Ladino, Latin, Nahuatl, and numerous other Indigenous languages in the Americas. Wasserman-Soler's fascinating book illustrates this polyglot world, even while his focus remains on debates between men in positions of power. It includes clear historiographic signposting and thought-provoking examples that will benefit students at all levels of research; this study and the vital connections it makes will also be of great

interest to specialists in all related fields. *Truth in Many Tongues* will be necessary reading for any study of language and religious conversion in premodern European and colonial contexts.

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*France before 1789: The Unraveling of an Absolutist Regime*. Jon Elster.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020. xii + 264 pp. $39.95.

Jon Elster's study of early modern France attempts to describe the environment from which its new revolutionary constitutional order would eventually emerge. His preface describes the book as "a long footnote to Tocqueville" in that it explores, from the perspective of a social scientist studying human nature, the kinds of political structures that circumscribed human activity and why actors behaved the way they did. The book focuses on institutions, psychology, and their interactions. The introduction offers a model for choice making and analyzes the mechanisms that govern such choices. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss "the psychology of the main social groups" from the perspectives of, first, "motivation" and, second, "information and beliefs." Chapter 4 focuses on administrative and judicial institutions and chapter 5 on representative assemblies. The concluding chapter makes observations on nine different themes deriving from the text, including topics such as "exemptions and exceptions," "conspiracy theories and agency-bias," and "passive resistance."

"The purpose of this book," in the author's words, "is to present the main features of this prodigiously complex social system" in order "to show how they worked in practice" (2). Many historians of early modern European political culture have spent careers trying to achieve this goal. It would have been miraculous for Elster to have accomplished this in a book that relies entirely on secondary sources and well-known published primary sources, especially without having cited some of the most important recent scholarship on early modern French society by the likes of James Collins, Jonathan Dewald, Stephen Miller, Daniel Roche, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal. The latter's absence is bewildering due to the natural affinity between Elster's focus on choice theory and the central role of choice within Rosenthal's new institutional economics approach.

A useful element of this work is its identification of many features of early modern political culture in terms that are comparable. For example, he describes "destabilizing mechanisms" such as how partial relief from oppression generated increased grievances about ongoing oppression, or the way in which social homogenization weakened forces in society that had previously contributed to social cohesion. One of the book's main