
Starting from the popularity and prevalence of well-known cultural productions such as *The Book of Mormon, Big Love*, and *Sister Wives*, Brenda R. Weber offers with her work *Latter-day Screens: Gender, Sexuality, and Mediated Mormonism* a rich insight into depictions of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), also known as Mormonism, in contemporary popular culture. Although Mormonism acts as a central feature in this work, the author does not aim to write an account about Mormonism as such. Rather, she envisions a book ‘about Mormonism as an idea, an image, and a way of thinking’ (p. ix) and particularly how this is shaped and portrayed through a wide range of media screens, hence mediated Mormonism. Methodologically, she draws upon an extensive array of media products, namely television shows (reality shows, talk shows, etc.), print materials (novels, memoirs, biographies, etc.), documentaries, movies, blogposts, websites, YouTube videos, podcasts, and so on. The main goal of the author is to analyse Mormonism as ‘both a meme and an analytic’ (p. 3). The former signifies all the images and ideas that constitute the cultural trope of Mormonism, and how it is represented in popular culture. The latter aims to investigate what this meme subsequently teaches us about hegemonic ways of thinking and identities, especially concerning gendered and sexual topics. To sketch the background of this work, she briefly introduces the religion itself, and provides an overview of its main tenets and evolutions. The book consists of 6 chapters, all dedicated to a specific theme, but always taking gender and sexuality into account as a common thread.

In the introduction, Weber approaches mediated Mormonism as ‘a lens for seeing American social investments in the meaning of justice’ (p. 15), and argues that notions of gender and sexuality serve as fault lines, and thus crucial for the understanding of how Mormonism shapes and brands itself vis-à-vis American society. Interestingly, despite the antifeminist and antigay sentiments of the LDS, their representations in mediated Mormonism paved the way for conversations in society at large concerning social issues, for instance gender roles, kinship, and same-sex relationships.

In chapter 1, the author outlines some of the main characteristics of Mormonism, such as spiritual neoliberalism, governmentality, self-branding, meritocracy, and prosperity gospel. She elucidates how these concepts are noticeable in cultural productions, and argues that these are not only quintessential features of Mormonism, but that they also characterize American society in general. The author thus suggests that mediated Mormonism bolsters ideas...
on what ‘Americanness’ (p. 55) is. The second chapter discusses the ‘Mormon Glow’ and the typical imagery of the bright and happy Mormon that is evoked in media, and how this relates to dominant ideas regarding whiteness and racialisation. The author delves into the problematic history of Mormonism when it comes to racism, and shows how the ‘Mormon Glow’ symbolizes the ‘purity, whiteness, boundless energy, and limitless success’ (p. 115) in mediated Mormonism. Both chapter 3 and 4 explore polygamy, albeit by using a different approach. Chapter 3 discusses what the author calls ‘progressive polygamy’ by analysing three cultural productions (Sister Wives, Big Love, and The Lonely Polygamist). Throughout this chapter, Weber notes that the quest to claim polygamous rights is undergirded by liberal notions such as pluralism, individualism, and free choice. Here, the author draws comparisons with the feminist and queer movement, as they make use of the same notions to call for equal rights. Chapter 4 turns the attention to fundamentalist and patriarchal polygamy, and how this is narrated in the television shows Escaping Polygamy, and Escaping the Prophet. She analyses the feminist politics in these cultural productions, and how it depicts notions of abuse, coercion, and manipulation.

Chapter 5 pays attention to how (hetero)normative femininity is constructed in mediated Mormonism, and how women are portrayed in cultural productions, including their attributed tasks of being happy, grateful, and docile, by making use of the concept of ‘toxic femininity’. In chapter 6, queer politics are taken into consideration, and how queer identities and sexualities are constituted in Mormon mediascape. As the LDS privileges heterosexuality, queer representations are sometimes vexed. However, LGBT+ Mormons are able to find representations in both new and old media.

In the conclusion, Weber underlines the central role of gender and sexuality in mediated Mormonism, and how these notions are constructed through screens. Surprisingly, despite the restrictive Mormon gender code, the author discerns feminist potential in mediated Mormonism, which consists of conservative and progressive narratives. Both discourses initiate and foster conversations about gender and queer justice. Thus, mediated Mormonism serves as a mirror for American society more broadly, which employs Mormonism as a yardstick to define its own norms concerning gender and sexuality. The final part of the book offers an epilogue that is dedicated to a merely personal reflection, zooming in on how her non-Mormon upbringing in the Mormon city Mesa (Arizona, USA) affected both her personal life and academic research interests.

All in all, this is a very compelling work that brings together insights from different academic fields, and is timely and highly relevant as well, in particular for scholars working on the intersections of gender, sexuality, media, and
religion. This book is also of great relevance to those interested in how screens and media shape and affect understandings of gender and sexuality. Although this work certainly contributes to the body of literature on religion, gender, and sexuality by bringing a relevant and original case study to the fore, the author could perhaps have embedded this book more in the current scholarly debates on religion and sexuality. Nevertheless, both the high quantity and the impressive variety in media sources is undoubtedly one of the strongest features of this work. Furthermore, although the main focus is centred on gender and sexuality, this book also attempts to utilise a more intersectional approach, as for instance race is taken into account as well. By not only providing an in-depth analysis of how gender and sexuality are depicted and constructed in mediated Mormonism, Brenda R. Weber goes beyond the main goal of her book, namely scrutinizing mediated Mormonism both as a meme and analytic. Additionally, she elaborately demonstrates how mediated Mormonism both reflects and shapes American society, in particular pertaining to gendered and sexual matters. Hence, (mediated) Mormonism does not operate within a vacuum, but is rather deeply intertwined with American society at large, or to put it in other words: ‘Mormonism [...] functions as a [...] symbolic portal into conversations about belief, meaning, identity, and values, as coalesced around gender an sexuality’ (p. 163).

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