

popular culture, and public debates. Chapter 8 explores discussions about marriage and ideal husbands, and demonstrates how the women's more or less pious projects cannot be easily fit into the mainstream dichotomies, from religious versus non-religious to pious versus integrated liberal Muslim. The last chapter reminds us that their efforts at self-fashioning take place in a securitized Britain, where the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act aims to create 'good' liberal Muslims by all means, including violence, rather than address the injustices and inequalities that mark their lives, as well as the lives of many non-Muslims in the country.

In articulating their aspirations, Liberatore argues, these Somali women transform the Islamic tradition from within and address the question of (their) difference in contemporary Britain. She shows how they use the tools and concepts of an Islamic tradition that has itself been continuously reformed in relation to what has happened outside Europe prior to migration and to what is happening in the contemporary encounter of Islam with Europe. Moreover, she demonstrates that these women engage critically not only with Islamic texts and teachings, but also with other forms of textual and experiential knowledge about ethnicity, race, culture, nationality, multiculturalism, extremism, radicalization, and Britishness. She additionally points out that their aspirations change in response to fragmented, incoherent, and ambiguous experiences and in relation to co-existing but at times conflicting projects, becoming a pious Muslim being one among others. Through all these demonstrations, Liberatore also describes how a liberal democracy renders invisible certain ways of being and attempts to "scrutinize, manage and govern difference" (p. 8).

The very concept of aspiration, the author convincingly claims, redirects our attention to the complex formation of subjectivity, away from the oppositions that have so far structured, stiffened, and homogenized depictions of Muslims, including segregation versus integration, religious norms versus

everyday actions, and piety versus secular-liberal ethics. In this way, Liberatore's book offers a valuable contribution to the burgeoning literature on subjectivity, gender, Muslims, and Islam in Europe. Equally important, in recounting how its main characters find the resources to "turn moments of potentiality into forms of striving" (p. 257), it stands out as an exemplary illustration of a more 'positive anthropology'.

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MANSUR, Marcia, and Marina THOMÉ, dirs., *The Sound of Bells* (O Som dos Sinos), documentary film, Portuguese, 70 min. Estúdio Crua, 2016. \$320.00. <https://store.der.org/the-sound-of-bells-p1012.aspx>.

One of the main ideas to be drawn from recent debates in the anthropology of religion is that 'religion' cannot be solely defined as a system of abstract ideas or beliefs about the sacred world, but must be understood as a complex and ever-changing set of mediation practices between different agents (practitioners, spirits, ancestors) involving specific material, sensory, and corporeal experiences. This is precisely the reason why cinema, the art of capturing life in motion par excellence, is so apt to explore and convey the kind of relationships that people establish with the 'hereafter'.

In this regard, Marcia Mansur and Marina Thomé's *The Sound of Bells*, a magnificent documentary about the bell-playing tradition in the northeastern regions of Brazil, is an outstanding example of the kind of contribution that cinema can provide to the contemporary studies of religious phenomena. Indeed, the film succeeds in showing the importance of a wide range of aspects of this fascinating musical tradition that go far beyond the realm of 'beliefs,' and also beyond that of concepts and words. To name just a few, these are the astonishing choreographic

movements of the bodies of players when rolling the bells to make them ‘sing’; the depiction of the aesthetic and chromatic environment of the churches where these musical performances take place, and, of course, the strident yet almost hypnotic rhythms that inhabitants of this damaged region of Brazil manage to create out of the bells.

Through a set of close-up shots of the rails of an ancient train line, we discover at the outset that this region flourished in the past, thanks to industry and local commerce. At that time, the train was used to transport passengers, whereas nowadays it transports only metals extracted from the mining resources of the region. In this context, the contemporary music from bells can be interpreted as a form of resilience against this process of social and ecological decay—as if the music from the bells would recall the long history of the city and the urgent need to keep it alive. Bells also acquire a performative role in the film: their music binds the community together and gives people a sense of belonging that acts as a reactive force capable of offsetting the inertial dispersion provoked by young people moving to other parts of the country.

From a technical point of view, the film is shot in a very intimate way, with a highly sensitive camera that frequently gives the spectator the almost magical impression of touching the people and the objects appearing on the screen. The film takes the basic premise of bell-players seriously, that is, that the bells are persons able to sing and possess feeling. Filming the bells as if they were persons is a cinematic ontological assumption.

Before finishing, I would like to briefly comment on the photography and visual treatment of images in the film. The directors employ the saturation of colors and the effect of blurring images to create a baroque and quasi-surrealistic universe that imbues statues and instruments with a special aura that makes them look almost like human beings. These techniques are increasingly used in ethnographic cinema, where post-production is becoming more important

than ever. In this film, these aesthetic choices are justified, and I have no objection to them. I would, however, like to mention one of the risks that we run when making excessive use of these kinds of filters and effects, that is, by embellishing the images of reality too much, we may end up denaturalizing them. Rendering the reality aesthetically too beautiful may be ethically problematic, in particular when treating conflictive issues such as demographic loss, poverty, and epidemic disasters as a consequence of the global mining industry. We are in the age of Instagram and post-photography. All the images that we encounter in our day-to-day lives have been extensively retouched and embellished. The possibilities at hand in terms of color correction and post-production effects are nowadays enormous—and we are free to exploit them. But, as ethnographic filmmakers, we must never forget the theoretical and ethical consequences of our formal choices.

I have often been asked why I make films about religion instead of just writing about it, and *Sound of Bells* would be a good answer to this question. In short, this documentary is an outstanding exploration of a marvelous Brazilian tradition in extreme danger of extinction. I recommend it without hesitation to any person interested in material religion, Latin American politics, or ethnomusicology.

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OOSTERBAAN, Martijn, *Transmitting the Spirit: Religious Conversion, Media, and Urban Violence*, 264 pp., notes, bibliography, index. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017. Paperback, \$39.95. ISBN 9780271078441.

Like much of the Global South, Brazil has witnessed a remarkable growth in Pentecostalism in the past decades. For instance, while in the 1991 census Evangelicals comprised 9 percent of the population (4 percent of whom