

Using Media in Religious Studies

Strategies of Representing Religion in Scholarly Approaches

Studying media in religions and cultures is a common practice within disciplines focusing on religion. The deconstruction of media is multifaceted and performed by analyzing texts, by focussing on material and visual cultures, by dealing with traditional and popular media or with film and mass media like the Internet. Compared to the broad and well-established field of research on media within religions, the usage of media for representing religion in scholarly work is a rather neglected topic. This is astonishing, since media have different effects and are perceived with different impacts even within the scientific community.

The use of media has a strong influence on the academic culture and habitus. Looking at the media we use, allows us to gain insight into the scholarly work: the main means of scientific discourse is still the text, sometimes supported by illustrations.

The use of text and images as the main media of scholarly work is rarely the object of a specific reflection on their effects and possibilities. Theoretical and methodological criticism of media within academia is still lacking sufficient attention. Scholars evoke emotions and mediate their ideas through the materials they present and in the way of they represent religion.

A lecture for students and a conference paper will differ in the style, presentation, and technique used. One might use his/her own rhetoric, show a film or allow the audience to hear sounds from original contexts. It makes a difference if a presenter only speaks about material objects or if s/he allows the audience to actually see them – like in a university collection – or even touch or smell them.

The November 2017 issue of JRFM explores the possibilities of using media in representing religions. David Morgan estimates that our usual scientific usage of media aims at suggesting objectivity. For example, charts can be used to display empirical “truth” or a photograph to “demonstrate” an argument: these figures and pictures are often introduced without an explanation of their own perspective or an analysis

of the production and the context in which they are embedded. This issue will explore the possibilities of analysing media as a crucial part of research and as a means for both producing and representing scholarly results.

In this issue, contributors with different perspectives are invited to participate to an interdisciplinary debate about the significance and the impact of media within academic work on religion. This self-reflection about producing and transmitting data in analysing, deconstructing and representing religion through media considers also the emotional impact of media upon scientific research as well as the different genres used in academic work. Furthermore, a specific reflection on our perspectives and a good knowledge about recipients' possible perceptions are necessary, if our aim is to inform and make our own methods transparent and suitable to what we want to express.

Therefore this issue collects articles on:

- theoretical approaches on religion(s) and the media,
- methodological reflections on the specific options of texts, illustrations, films or objects for re-presenting religions,
- perceptions of different media and multimedia in science,
- aesthetic effects of different media on scholars, dealing with the tension between objectivity and subjectivity,
- interdisciplinary debates on religions connected with emic and etic positions represented by media,
- international or regional cultures of media in studying religions: preferring traditional texts or new media, favouring oral or written cultures etc.
- social contexts – like gender – connected with media dealing with religions
- other topics related to the overall theme of this issue.

Articles of 25,000-30,000 characters (including spaces) should be posted online for peer review by February 28, 2017 on the journal homepage www.jrfm.eu. We kindly ask authors to register. The publication is scheduled for November 2017. For any questions regarding the call for papers or the submission and publication process, please contact Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler (beinhaue@staff.uni-marburg.de).