Aromatic Religion: Eliciting the Olfactory in the Everyday

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Smell is often ancillary to sight, hearing, and touch in conceiving of what counts as religious practice. However, smell is not bounded in the same ways that the other senses are. It can sneak up on you, take hold of your senses, and move between the porousness of the world—it transcends the preconceived boundaries between the material and intellectual. This work seeks to grapple with smell, not as a feature of religion, but as its very manifestation in the world. We are soliciting articles that take the histories, ethics, and aesthetics of smell seriously. We encourage work that focuses on understanding smell as a feature of lived, embodied, and material religion and a focal point for what it means to be religious.

We are particularly interested in pieces that challenge western understandings of the olfactory and engage with a variety of approaches to the olfactory. Proposed chapters should reflect on the way in which smell is connected to multiple spheres of life such as culture, ethnicity, pleasure, and other senses. In this reflection on the riot of elements that compose the religious worlds of various communities, histories, and spaces, we invite authors to reflect on the way that the olfactory challenges the distance between observer and practitioner.

Finally, we hope to move towards understanding how focusing on smell, ontologies of smell, hauntologies of smell, and lived realities overwhelmed by smell push our understanding of religion further. How does an aromatic religion help us better understand the sacred dimensions of social and material life? What concepts does smell elicit for thinking about and with religion? How does smell transform the field of religious studies beyond binaries between the living and dead, visible and invisible, feeling and understanding, and text and practice?

Intended Audience:

This volume on religion and smell will be valuable to scholars who seek to explore the aromatic dimensions of their own work. We also hope the volume will be utilized by teachers in advanced classes on historical and ethnographic methodology, as well as being paired with courses in the humanities and liberal arts that are expanding the boundaries of experiential learning.

Submissions:

1. 300-word abstract
2. Name, email, and short biography
3. Inclusion of diagrams, photos, or other visual materials

Please send submissions to James Edmonds (jmedmond@asu.edu) and Justin Doran (jmdoran@middlebury.edu)

Conference or presentation associated with the book:

If we are to insert smell more fully into the study of religion, it seems essential to include a venue in which smells can be shared. The book launch will coincide with a special session at AAR on aromatic religion.

Proposed Timeline:

Deadline for Abstract Submission: December 1st, 2019

Notification of Inclusion in volume: January 15th , 2019

Paper Drafts Due: August 1st, 2020