

Special Issue



Sorry cites: The (necro) politics of citation in the anthropology of religion

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Abstract

In this article, I analyze the under-citation of Black and/or Latine scholars—especially those located disciplinarily within religious studies—in the anthropology of religion. I draw from my own experience as an editorial assistant at *History of Religions*, manuscript reviewer, and Latine ethnographer of religion to speculate on the reasons why researchers might refuse to cite them, preferring either to neglect their contributions or to "plagnore" them, to borrow a term coined by legal scholar, law professor, and activist Lolita Buckner Inniss. I then expand on Chicana and Boricua feminist and race scholar Nichole Margarita Garcia's theorization of under-citation as "spirit-murdering." I invoke philosopher and political scientist Achille Mbembe's formulation of *necropolitics* to make the case that citation is a matter of life and death for Black and Latine women scholars in particular. In the absence of institutional accountability for editors and authors, I conclude with recommendations for the diversification of our scholarship and syllabi.

Résumé

Dans cet article, j'analyse la sous-citation des chercheurs noirs et/ou latins - en particulier ceux qui se situent dans la discipline des études religieuses - dans l'anthropologie de la religion. Je m'appuie sur ma propre expérience d'assistante éditoriale à *History of Religions*, d'évaluatrice de manuscrits et d'ethnographe latina de la religion pour spéculer sur les raisons pour lesquelles les chercheurs pourraient refuser de les citer, préférant soit négliger leurs contributions, soit les "plagnore", pour reprendre un terme inventé par la juriste, professeur de droit et activiste Lolita Buckner Inniss. Je développe ensuite la théorie de Nichole Margarita Garcia, féministe chicana et boricua et spécialiste des questions raciales, qui considère la sous-citation comme un "assassinat de l'esprit". J'invoque la formulation de la nécropolitique du philosophe et politologue Achille Mbembe pour démontrer que la citation est une question de vie ou de mort pour les femmes universitaires noires et latines en particulier. En l'absence de responsabilité institutionnelle pour

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les éditeurs et les auteurs, je conclus par des recommandations pour la diversification de nos études et de nos programmes.

Keywords

citation, plagiarism, Black feminism, anthropology of religion, autoethnography, gender, Lucumí/Santería

Mots-clés

citation, plagiat, féminisme noir, anthropologie de la religion, autoethnographie, genre, Lucumí/Santería

Macbeth: This is a sorry sight.

Lady Macbeth: A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

Macbeth: There's one did laugh in's sleepe,

And one cry'd, Murther, that they did wake each other: I stood and heard them: But they did say their Prayers,

And addresst them againe to sleepe.

—Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 2, Scene 2

At the moment in the "Scottish play" from which these lines are drawn, Lady Macbeth had begun to regret not killing the king herself when her husband burst into the room. He assured her that he has "done the deed" before the exchange above ensues. The first folio editions of the play do not specify to what sight "sorry" refers; the stage direction "[Macbeth] looks on his hands" was not added until 1723. This sentence has undoubtedly served to foreshadow his and Lady Macbeth's obsession with unclean hands and underscore them as symbols of culpability in the play (Gibińska, 2017). Nevertheless, the fact that everyone who reads it reads the stage direction, alongside the lines that Shakespeare actually wrote, might have artificially circumscribed Macbeth's more comprehensive declaration: "This is a sorry sight." Everything he was seeing in that instant was "sorry," in the sense of sorrowful, pathetic, or—pardoning the French—fucked up: his bloody self, his wife, their increasingly sticky situation. Lady Macbeth's dismissal of his concerns prompts Macbeth to recall—as if to offer evidence of what's so sorry—that he heard the king's guards (drugged by his wife) awaken, talk in their sleep, and say their prayers before losing consciousness again.

The phrase "sorry sight" came to mind when Ingie Hovland and Britt Halvorson invited me to present on a panel about the politics of citation at the virtual Society for the Anthropology of Religion meeting in Spring 2021.² The panel was entitled, "Citation as Complicated Gift: Who Do We Cite and Why?" When I first read the abstract in my email, I misread the key phrase as "complicated *grift.*" For this seemingly bizarre interpolation, I must have flashed back to some of the manuscripts I had read as an editorial assistant at *History of Religions* in the early 2000s, when for the first time I saw how the sausage got made in academic publishing. I was also reminded of my more recent experiences as a manuscript reviewer for journals and university presses. Citation—or lack

thereof—has registered at times as a kind of petty swindle or fraud, undertaken for various reasons at a significant remove from the conventions of gift exchange.

These are strong words, and to be clear, the occasions in which citational practices have struck me as deficient have been rare. I have routinely been overawed by the research and writing of my colleagues in the anthropology and history of religions—their originality as thinkers, their stamina as researchers, their ability to find *le mot juste* in pellucid prose. I have also followed and concurred with the Cite Black Women Collective, which has brought attention since 2017 to the myriad ways in which women scholars of African descent are scandalously under-cited. As Christen A. Smith, Erica L. Williams, Imani A. Wadud, and Whitney N.L. Pirtle assert (2021: 11),

Plagiarism, like knowledge, power, and the academy, is a form of exploitation intimately tied to the projects of colonialism, slavery, and their progeny: white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, and imperialism . . . For centuries, people have been content with erasing us from mainstream bibliographies, genealogies of thought, and conversations about knowledge production because they view our ideas like they view our bodies: as eminently violable.

Their critiques resonate with my own observations regarding the under-citation in the anthropology of religion of Black and/or Latine scholars, especially those who are located disciplinarily in religious studies.³ In my experience, such under-citation happens more often than is publicly acknowledged at conferences or in the main body of research articles. Under-citation tends to be mentioned among friends in non-academic settings, or to colleagues off-stage—at restaurants and hotel bars—hours after the panels and workshops have adjourned.

That is changing, as citation increasingly becomes a research problematic and the subject of a growing literature, thanks in large part to #CiteBlackWomen (as social media hashtag and movement). In this special issue of *Studies in Religion*, I open by reflecting on my previous experiences as a young Latine writer and graduate student, before speculating on the reasons why anthropologists of religion might refuse to cite colleagues who are Black and/or Latine.⁴ I hypothesize that the expectations of networking and uncertainty of the academic job market have exacerbated an existing trend for anthropologists either to neglect the publications of Black and Latine scholars outright or to "plagnore" them, to borrow a term coined by legal scholar, law professor, and activist Lolita Buckner Inniss (2018, personal communication via social media).⁵ I argue that peer-reviewing structures as currently configured (with a paucity of BIPOC—Black, Indigenous, and other people of color—in referee pools) militate against the "calling out" of scholars for both citational refusal and plagiarism.

I submit as a counter-example citational practices in the Afro-Cuban tradition of Lucumí, in which the contributions of religious ancestors are continually verbalized and rituals cannot move forward without the recitation of their names. I then expand on Chicana and Boricua feminist and race scholar Nichole Margarita Garcia's recent theorization of under-citation as a form of "spirit-murdering." I invoke Achille Mbembe's (2003) formulation of *necropolitics* to make the case that citation is a matter of life and death for Black and Latine scholars, for whom earning a livelihood in the "life of the mind" is already difficult. In the absence of institutional mechanisms for holding editors

and authors accountable, I conclude with recommendations for the diversification (if not decolonization) of our scholarship and syllabi (Mbembe, 2015). Throughout, I take the lines from *Macbeth* in my epigraph as section headings, to impress upon readers what is truly at stake in under-citation as a site of violence, deceit, and complicity, as well as to underscore the sensory and affective components of citational praxis.

In a conventional academic article, an author builds their case by adding strategically to a mound of corroborating data that amasses evidentiary weight in the course of exposition. I proceed—for reasons that will soon become apparent—by adducing as proof the lack of it, the very absence of a proverbial paper trail that (like a faithful eyewitness) would lead us to a set of suspects. The confidentiality to which reviewers are bound means that I cannot put forward concrete examples. In any case, the structural problem I describe cannot be resolved by simply "outing" individual bad actors, when sizeable socioeconomic incentives for under-citation remain. Emboldened by the methodological interventions of Kakali Bhattacharya (2017, 2020), I speak for the most part in an autoethnographic vein, rooted in my positionality as a former editorial assistant, Latine scholar, manuscript reviewer, and ethnographer of religion. I seek to establish that speaking about sorry cites is not, *pace* Lady Macbeth, "a foolish thought," but a salutary interruption of business as usual.

"To say a sorry sight"

"Latina College Student Used 'Hence' in Paper, Is Accused of Plagiarism," the headline read in October 2016, leading to a blog post written by McNair Fellow and student researcher Tiffany Martínez (Wanshel, 2016). Her professor had accused Martínez of cutting-and-pasting from another source at least one passage of a literature review that she turned in, writing, "This is not your word" in blue ink next to "hence," which had been circled. "The word 'not' was underlined. Twice," Martínez (2016) pointed out, relating that the professor had stated, "This is not your language," in front of her classmates when passing back the graded papers. Martínez opened the blog post by enumerating her many academic credentials and elaborating on the injustice of having to do so, since, "There are students who will be assumed capable without the need to list their credentials in the beginning of a reflective piece." She addressed the role played by race and class in the extent to which students suspected of plagiarism are given the benefit of the doubt. She went on to detail the heavy emotional and affective repercussions of her professor's allegation, writing,

Instead of working on my English paper that is due tomorrow, I felt it crucial to reflect on the pain that I am sick of swallowing . . . Another element of this invalidation is that as I sit here with teary eyes describing the distress I am too familiar with, the professor has probably forgotten all about it. My heartache can not be universally understood and until it is, I have to continue to fight.

The blog post detailing Martínez's "desolation" was poignantly entitled, "Academia, Love Me Back."

Like many kids from immigrant backgrounds, I have a memory of being accused unjustly of copying someone else's work.⁶ It happened at a Roman Catholic parochial school outside of Elizabeth, New Jersey, in the first grade. My white non-Latine teacher thought a story I had turned in was a little too polished for my age, leading her to believe that one of my parents had written it. I still remember the meeting—not yet referred to, faux-corporately, as a "conference"—to which she summoned them to hash out the matter. As soon as my parents began speaking in their Cuban-accented English, the teacher "realized" her error.⁷ I put "realized" in scare-quotes because her assumption that they could not have written what I wrote was perhaps as much a microaggressive instance of racism and classism as her incredulity at a six-year-old's storytelling prowess. At the time, though, I was relieved, and my parents even found her suspicion to be a source of pride.

It is all too fitting that my story was a retelling of Columbus's first voyage. That is, at any rate, one of the only other things I remember about this sorry episode. (I can recall the landscape-ruled off-white paper with sky blue broken lines on which I wrote the story, but not my words on it.) When I read Martínez's blog post, it resonated with me as an emblematic instance of the catch-22 in which multilingual BIPOC scholars find ourselves.8 For Latine scholars, neither Spanish nor English might feel like a "'home' tongue" in North American academia; if we speak with accents and refuse to "code switch," we are criticized for having "wild tongues" that need taming (Anzaldúa, 1987: 53). But we can become only too proficient in English—mastering the basics in addition to the recherché, such as archaisms and rhetorical conceits—thereby risking some mortifying version of what Martínez went through. Beginning in elementary school, teachers' "politics of respectability" affect their perceptions of BIPOC students' academic performance and intellectual potential (Higginbotham, 1993). When a professor brought my attention to a word in a graduate research paper they thought was not my own-"therefore"—they said that since I didn't talk that way, I shouldn't write that way. One thing I was sure of at that moment is that they hadn't listened to me speak in our numerous seminars together.9 And they did not regard me as a person who was authorized to use therefore.

The consequences of being accused of taking someone else's words often depend on one's racial/ethnic, gender/sexual, and class identities. Within the university, the gamut runs from a tap on the wrist at an office of academic integrity to expulsion from the institution at which the alleged offense occurred. Adding insult to injury, BIPOC go through the kind of grammatological hazing that Martínez underwent only to realize that, as newly minted PhD's and junior faculty, they themselves are not cited for the research they have done. It can be a bitter pill to swallow when tools for citation—from software to citation apps for the compilation of accurate bibliographies—are readily accessible. Inputting keywords in academic databases easily reveals (at least for institutionally affiliated users) what scholars have published on any topic, sometimes before the hard copies of books and journals have left the printers' production floors. Seeing that one's publications have not been cited can lead one to believe that peers do not rate them highly enough to cite, even after they have gone through a grueling review process—sometimes having been revised to remove the very hences, therefores, and arcana that may strike reviewers as affected.

The hallmark of knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition is novelty. Scholars are trained and highly motivated to adopt "rhetorics of invention" that couch research findings as the outcome of a noble quest (Brown, 1994). PhD students are expected to produce original work. They are also taught to "cite upward," or give credit to more favorably placed or renowned scholars with whom they would want to be socially and conceptually connected. 10 In the history of religions in the early 2000s, citing upward was a matter of citing backward—reaching ever further into the historical emergence of the field, to the "superstar classics." These are not only works designated by "terms such as 'seminal paper,' 'the first attempt,' 'founder,' 'pioneer,' 'revolutionized,' 'credible,' 'the most important one'...," but also top-tier publications that boast a high citation count over an extended period of time (Wang and Bownas, 2005). During my time at the University of Chicago Divinity School (from 1997 to 2010), students' name-dropping of scholars from remote places and times reflected the ancestor veneration practices of that institution. I (embarrassingly presumptuously in retrospect) modeled my own style after that of Jonathan Z. Smith, whose encyclopedic knowledge base was—to his death unassisted by web browsers, as he reportedly never used the Internet even to send an email (Sinhababu, 2008).

Such powers of recall were beyond me, but other students shared the same aspiration to erudition. The cisgender women in my program seldom stated that we wanted to be taken as seriously as the (cis) men, but it was evident in our endless quotations, redundant examples, and overstuffed bibliographies. I knew that I would have to "show my work"—the burden of proof was heavy and a depth of historical and ethnographic knowledge was prized more highly than breadth. At graduate students' workshops, entire structures of argumentation might be brought down by the push of a rusty nail: a misattribution of a quote or mistranslation of an adverb in *The German Ideology*. Our cynicism was idealism in hipster jeans: we thought it possible both to get it right and to be original. The effect of this (Hegelian?) idealism could be paralyzing intellectually. It beckoned the writer's block that might sit unmoved for months as the post-ABD time-to-degree ticked by and bank accounts suddenly flush with student loan money at the beginning of an academic term dried up just as fast, after the rent and gas bills were paid.

As my Hampshire College professor Carollee Bengelsdorf had told me many years prior, there is nothing new under the sun, so—to paraphrase her follow-up—competence and probity are perhaps the best one can offer as a scholar. This was an ethical corrective to the neocolonial fantasies of "discovering" a new research site or methodological angle that were an inescapable feature of the ethnographic literature I was consuming. The phrase *Nothing new under the sun* sometimes bubbled up to temper my despair, my acute "anxiety of influence" and worry that I was failing those whose insights had meant the most to me (Bloom, 1973). I wanted to tell my prospective readers whose work had sparked my questions and shaped my sentences, but more often than not such disclosures were derided by professors as self-indulgent. How many junior ethnographers, seeking to engage in self-reflexive citational praxis, have been told by well-meaning mentors, "Nobody cares about *you* . . ."? I had heard the same in so many words.

"There's one did laugh in's sleepe"

I was one of two graduate editorial assistants at *History of Religions* from 2002 to 2007, before the debut of Editorial Manager, the online data-entry, manuscript submission, and review system used by many journals today. We were charged with requesting book reviews from prospective reviewers, mailing books out for review, and hassling reviewers to submit said reviews, as well as processing article submissions, filing, and copyediting the journal issues by hand in pencil. In between the business of corresponding with UC Press staff and our faculty editors—to whom I am forever thankful for the chance to do this work—we read current manuscripts and the archives housed in a couple of vertical gray metal filing cabinets that had seen better days.¹² It was clear that, along with primary sources, the "prestige citations" were those that hearkened back to the dawn of Religionswissenschaft (the social-scientific study of religion) in the nineteenth century. They authorized the author in question to make his—and it was usually a cisgender man's—claims. Seldom did men cite women.¹³ Even if there were comparatively few Black and Latine scholars to be cited (given the "unbearable whiteness" of the history of religions as a field) they were not put in conversation with other authors as often as they should have been, aside from the late scholarly giant Charles H. Long. 14

Our otherwise comprehensive "Procedures Manual" said nothing about citation. Then as now, there are several types of under-citation, which I will soon address. But I can say that, as editorial assistants, we could only be so vigilant about them, bearing in mind that we routinely exceeded the paid hours we were allocated to do our work. Despite our habitual sleep deprivation (as "good" grad students), we weren't totally "asleep at the wheel," but peer-reviewing structures do not encourage either journal staff or anonymous reviewers to be on the alert for assorted varieties of under-citation. They are not, to my knowledge, often furnished with guidelines on how to take under-citation into account when passing judgment on the publication of articles. They are urged in broad terms to evaluate an article's fortes and flaws, as well as to what degree it contributes to the author's discipline(s).

One exception is COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers, endorsed by a handful of publishers and journals—including *Studies in Religion*—over the last decade. According to these guidelines, a reviewer should "not suggest that authors include citations to the reviewer's (or their associates') work merely to increase the reviewer's (or their associates') citation count or to enhance the visibility of their or their associates' work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons" (Hames and COPE Council staff, 2013). This rule was undoubtedly formulated to combat the emergence of "mafia"-like "citation cartels" in which members conspire to cite each other's work instead of non-members' more pertinent publications, so as to drive up their citation impact metrics (Enago Academy, 2017). Yet this COPE injunction is coupled with another, that reviewers should "not allow their reviews to be influenced by the origins of a manuscript, by the nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the authors, or by commercial considerations" (Hames and COPE Council staff, 2013). Preventing reviewers from taking race/ethnicity into account—in an effort to secure "colorblind" assessments—could actively discourage

them from fostering "active citation practices that both quantify and equilibrate racial representation" (Cite Black Authors, 2022).

These are consequential considerations in view of BIPOC underrepresentation in referee pools, due to minoritized scholars' smaller numbers in tenured and senior positions. Since anonymous reviews are unremunerated, when BIPOC are asked to vet manuscripts, the incentives for these overworked and underappreciated colleagues to do so is low. If they do agree to reviews, they might not feel confident calling out scholars for citational refusal and plagiarism. BIPOC will have too often seen peers be rewarded for mediocre academic work in graduate school and may not think that their critiques about under-citation will make a difference, no matter how much energy they might expend in building open-and-shut cases. They might suspect that editors do not want to see the "receipts"—the term coined by speakers of African American Vernacular English for proof of bad conduct. They might not believe that confidential notes to the editor will truly remain confidential. No one wants to be branded as difficult, pushy, or paranoid—least of all, members of groups that have historically been stereotyped using this pathologizing gendered and racialized language (Roden, 2021).

The most egregious form of under-citation is plagiarism: duplicating another's writing word for word and passing it off as one's own. Replication of one's *own* work in different publications, as the result of "blatant attempts to wring too many articles from one study," is called "salami-slicing" (Baggs, 2008: 296). As Ben Martin (quoted in West, 2012) writes of such research misconduct, "With the growing use of publications as a performance indicator comes escalating pressure to exploit one's database, survey or study to the full with as many articles as possible . . . The resulting papers are often sent to different journals." The existence of these "parallel papers" might only be ascertained after an article has gone to press, setting off a flurry of emails at odd hours between agitated journal editors, editorial assistants, and the author as they scramble to address the crisis. ¹⁵

Dr. Lolita Buckner Inniss (2018, personal communication via social media) has coined the neologism "plagnore" to denote the perhaps more common occurrence of one scholar summarizing another's insights and then completely ignoring them in their citations. A "plagnorer" rewords an argument or theoretical framework without any attribution, thereby misrepresenting it as an original formulation. A plagnorer might also cite a work but distort its main point enough to make it seem that they and another author are making a markedly different contribution to the literature on a topic. "Plagnore" captures perfectly the intent and deceitful nature of these practices; its brilliance as a portmanteau derives from its recognition that this species of under-citation requires a double movement: to copy then deliberately disregard. "Plagiarism" springs etymologically from *plagium*, "a kidnapping," and the Greek *plagion*, "meaning 'slanting' or 'athwart," which "came to mean 'sideways,' 'askance,' or 'treacherous'" (Small, 2007: 1598). Plagnoring, then, is a phony claim not to know that something is amiss, a counterfeit ignorance that further snubs and discounts the person whose authorship is being overlooked.

Plagnoring is exceptionally insidious because it allows offenders some plausible deniability. Writers all have signature prose styles, cadences, word echoes, and (less charitably) discursive tics. Their residues can be detected behind a summarized argument like invisible ink, and sensitivity to them serves us well in the detective work we do in

archives.¹⁶ But it is hard to argue that the absence of a citation is intentional, or that it is necessary to rectify it in a particular way.¹⁷ Reviewers' "spidey senses" might tingle when they feel a concept has been misattributed but they cannot stake their reputation on a sensation, no matter how visceral. They know that the resemblance between two authors' arguments might be a simple coincidence—the effect of reading the same books and learning from mentors with similar approaches. Moreover, reviewers have to be somewhat familiar with scholarly subfields to discern that a publication has been plagnored; the plagnorer might have calculated that most reviewers will not be acquainted with a plagnored author's work because they publish in another discipline or language. This is a fair assumption, since the exponential upsurge of journals, book series, and themed handbooks in the last few years has made it ever more challenging to keep up with scholarship outside one's chief area of expertise, especially when the content is paywalled by major publishers and databases.¹⁸

Undertaking an investigation into plagnoring is therefore delicate in the extreme. Even the infamously withering "Reviewer 2" might recoil from the task. Tracking down evidence of plagnoring takes time and ample bandwidth, in the sense of "the energy or mental capacity required to deal with [this] situation" in the face of competing responsibilities (Klinkenborg, 2022). Scholars with disabilities or fatigue-inducing chronic conditions might not have the "spoons"—the units of energy—to deal with the extra labor this requires (Miserandino, 2003). An author is usually given the benefit of the doubt if there is no "smoking gun," like a phrase that is reproduced wholesale. Intellectual property rights might be protected under the law, but research in the humanities and social sciences is usually not judged lucrative or unique enough to warrant protection. Ironically, however, under-citation reflects the immense worth of research that can be framed as seminal or groundbreaking within the "military-academic-industrial complex" (Stephan Hornberger quoted in Hulsether, 2018: 14).

"I stood and heard them"

In a group conversation that took place in 2022, I heard scholar of Africana studies and Afro-Diasporic religions Tracey E. Hucks speak of the "intellectual kleptomania" that drives academics to pass themselves off as the originators of insights that are not their own. Although one source going back a century refers to "such a disease as intellectual kleptomania" (Schneider, 1922), I had never heard the phrase, and Dr. Hucks's invocation of it struck me as particularly profound, given the history of whites and non-Black POC cannibalizing Black cultural production—music, dance, fashion, food, language, and more. As LeRon L. Barton (2015) stated, in an oft-quoted line about appropriation and the deaths of Black people as portrayed in the media, "They love our culture, but they don't love us." What's more, the fetishization of Black cultural forms plays a role in supporting "race fakers" in academia who claim to embody or be adjacent to Blackness, manipulatively capitalizing on the "epistemic privilege" that may—under certain all-too-infrequent circumstances—be granted to people of African descent (Táíwò, 2022). 19

Dr. Hucks framed "intellectual kleptomania" (2022, personal communication) as an immoral compulsion. As Gerben Meynen (2016: 75) writes, "usually [kleptomaniacs] steal objects they do not need at all." A recurrent complaint of Black and Latine scholars

is precisely that they are plagnored by scholars who are more—not less—advantageously situated within the academy. They are senior faculty or non-Black or Latine POC whose greater degree of privilege might have been used to lift others up, but was instead used to eclipse their would-be competitors in the academic marketplace. Writers for popular periodicals with a proverbial megaphone routinely plagnore scholars with a microphone. When *Yoga Journal* reprinted photos of Rosa Parks that historian and cultural theorist Stephanie Y. Evans had unearthed in the course of a research project, Evans (2020) said, "Like academic publications that do not cite or reference my work, it speaks volumes about how Black women's intellectual labor is ignored, silenced, or co-opted. Social media is one thing, but academics, news sources, and professional publications have a responsibility to operate with a greater responsibility to not *actively* render intellectual labor invisible." The erasure of Black women's scholarly production in the public sphere is facilitated by the ubiquity of misogynoir, coined by queer Black media and digital humanities *scholar* Moya Bailey (2010; Bailey and Trudy, 2018) to denote the racist misogyny aimed at Black women.

Black and Latine academics are pressed to offer unremunerated feedback to colleagues who sometimes "forget" to cite us. Their objective is not collaboration but extraction. It was N. Fadeke Castor (2022, personal communication) who sensitized me to the violent imagery conjured by the phrase, "Let me pick your brain." The origins of this idiom are germane to my argument: "The generalized meanings of *to pick* as to gather or obtain, to ransack or rifle, or to rob, leads us to 'to pick [someone's] brain (or brains),' meaning to gather information or ideas from someone else's brain to use for our own purposes" (Stover, 2008). Scholars who have found us on the Internet or at conferences may promise to credit our insights, only to plagnore private correspondence and unpublished presentations. Even when you say something like—and here I'm reaching into my email—"The use of my name with any quotation or paraphrase of my input is all I would ask," you might be nowhere in the brain-picker's bibliography.²⁰

There is no excuse for not citing, yet scholars do not cite "for reasons." Individual researchers might fail to cite Black and Latine scholars due to the aforementioned pressure to distinguish themselves as the creators of novel ideas that will not only contribute to but intervene in—and even reorganize—their academic field(s). Another factor in under-citation is the deterioration of the academic job market since 2008. The "reality of a broken academic system" means that, "There are so few jobs, and so many people, that if you want a tenure track job, you'll have to move wherever you can go, if you can get one" (Wood, 2021). According to a study conducted by L. Maren Wood, "over 50% of the jobs in humanities and social science disciplines went to ABDs and year 1 on the job market," such that "less than 3% of jobs went to people with the title of adjunct." Search committees reward candidates who already have articles and book chapters under review or in press on their curricula vitae.

Having paid a heavy emotional, social, and financial price to obtain a doctorate, scholars may wager that their professional fortunes will improve if they depict themselves as being among the few fresh new voices and name-check only "the same old white men who were involved in the 'great debates' many decades ago" (Andrews, 2020: 278)—some of whom (coincidentally?) teach at the institutions to which they have applied for jobs. "Citation is aspirational," Kathryn A. Mariner writes (2022: 218), and

(as in the case of citation cartels) scholars customarily cite the cliques by which they would want to be cited. Predictably, perhaps, the person who cites upward in a bid for kinship is often "ignored by the (cited) grandees" (Mkhwanazi, 2023; Cronin and Shaw, 2002: 44).

There is also a disciplinary dimension to plagnoring that is relevant for this special issue of *Studies in Religion*. Religious studies does not have the same standing as a social science that anthropology does; it is one of the "interdisciplines" distinguished by its subject rather than a characteristic methodological approach (Hulsether, 2018). While anthropologists are often hired by religious studies departments, the same is not true of ethnographers of religion in anthropology departments. Anthropology journals rarely review book-length ethnographies by scholars without doctorates in anthropology. Those who adopt social-scientific methods in religious studies are dismissed by anthropologists as dilettantes lacking rigor, when "rigor" is a shibboleth in both academic hiring and reviewing, to be invoked if the gatekeeping of BIPOC meets some resistance. According to Black and Latine interlocutors, this gatekeeping promotes the under-citation of religious studies scholars, because anthropologists can ascribe insights to empirical observation without citing the historical and multidisciplinary studies of religion in which they located key concepts.

When asked about instances in which her work had been plagnored, Dr. Hucks (2022, personal communication) asserted that a scholar "can smell their own work." This statement speaks to the relationship between a scholar and their output as a deep sensory and cognitive bond. It is significant that, given the post-Enlightenment sensory hierarchy that prevails in "the West," smell ranks far below sight as an indicator that something has taken place (Quinlan-McGrath, 2013: 19). Perhaps for this reason, Stephanie Y. Evans (2020) drew on a visual metaphor to convey her conviction that she had been plagiarized: "My theoretical framework, methodology, and analytical approach are narrow and purposeful, so when I *see* this combination of names together or memoir sources presented a certain way, I *know* it is my work." The olfactory sense comes in third—behind sound—in the ocularcentric epistemic hierarchy that determines evidentiary reliability. However, smell is unsurpassed as a memory-trigger, and plagnored work is redolent of its origin. No matter how skillfully a theft is concealed, scholars intuitively know the funk of their creation. Just one whiff gives it away.

"But they did say their Prayers"

The Afro-Cuban tradition of Lucumí is popularly called Santería, but it is not "saint worship," as the "ía" might imply. It involves veneration of ancestors and West African deities called *orishas*, according to Cuban historical precedents.²³ In Lucumí, a prayer called the *moyuba* is uttered before any ritual of consequence can take place. The moyuba asks permission for ceremonial action of the cardinal points, major cosmological entities, and the energy that gave rise to the universe (called *aché*). An adequate moyuba lists lineage founders as well as the immediate deceased religious ancestors of the speaker. M. Jacqui Alexander (2005: 288) defines *mojuba* as,

an expansive memory refusing to be housed in any single place, bound by the limits of time, enclosed within the outlines of a map, encased in the physicality of body, or imprisoned as exhibit in a museum. A refusal that takes its inheritance from the Crossing, which earlier prophets had been forced to undertake from the overcrowded passageways in a place called Gorée, the door of no return, still packed centuries later with the scent of jostled grief so thick that no passage of human time could absorb it.

The moyuba is not a genteel gallery tour; it is an incantation that generates and realigns energies, enlivening ancestral figures. The moyuba rebukes the anonymity imposed on enslaved peoples by the Middle Passage and, like Hucks (2022, personal communication) above, takes the olfactory as an all-enduring trace of memory.

The ancestors are not only appealed to but manifest through the moyuba. They materialize through the breath of speakers that carry *aché*'s primordial energy, expelled from their mouths as warm air and droplets of saliva as they say ancestors' priestly names and append to them the locution *Ibae*, "Praise be to" (Beliso-De Jesús, 2015: 223). Jafari S. Allen (2022: 323; 2011: xii) writes in the acknowledgments to his books, "Mojuba to all of my ancestors, known and unknown." This formulation echoes one I have heard many times at the beginning of a ritual for the ancestors, or *egún*, in a predominantly Black Lucumí community where I have conducted the bulk of my ethnographic research: "*ibae* to all of the *egún* I know and do not know." Analogous citation practices exist in indigenous cultures that emphasize the evocation of the dead as integral to the continued transmission of life forces and vibrations across generations (Jackson, 2005).

An ethos of fidelity to the past animates Afro-Diasporic religions including Brazilian Candomblé and Haitian Vodou. In Lucumí, divergences from convention are anathemized and dismissed with a wave of the hand as *inventos*, "inventions" (Brown, 2003: 11). Most lineages pride themselves on being unoriginal and un-inventive. Practitioners memorize ritual sequences by imitating elders' embodied and discursive micropractices (Pérez, 2016). Upon initiation, they receive priestly names that were carried by innumerable priests who came before them. Certain figures are often cited as making specific contributions to the tradition as a whole; for example, Ferminita Gómez (Oschabí) and Ma Monserrate González (Obá Tero) are acclaimed verbally and in writing for transmitting the knowledge of how to consecrate the orisha Olokún in "ocha-centric" lineages.²⁴ Lucumí acknowledges the innovative agency of the enslaved, their descendants, and those who have handed down the tradition.

Make no mistake: citation in Afro-Diasporic religions is not innocent of political motivations, but intensely embedded in power/knowledge relations and ideological structures—as when practitioners mobilize rhetorics of authenticity to legitimate practices of recent vintage as recuperations of lost traditions (Palmié, 2013). This caveat notwithstanding, their orientation to citation may still be a useful counterpoint as we consider the religious dimensions of citation and erasure in the contemporary academy. Dána-Ain Davis (2019) has explicitly spoken of citing Black women and kin "as spiritual practice." Generous, pedagogical, and transformative citation pays homage (Pérez, 2018; Kornei, 2021). For Sara Ahmed (2017: 15–16), "Citation is feminist memory . . . Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before." Katherine McKittrick (2021: 27) theorizes, "Citation could . . . perhaps be considered one fulcrum

of black studies: in a world that despises blackness the bibliography—written or sung or whispered or remembered or dreamed or forgotten—ushers in, or initiates, or teaches, or affirms."²⁵ Engaging #CiteBlackWomen in the context of #SayHerName, a social media hashtag created to protest the state terror inflicted on Black women, Savannah Shange (2022: 195) declares, "Citation is ceremony, and a bibliography is an altar—a literary libation invoking the ancestors of the word, honoring those who make it possible for the text to emerge."²⁶ For Shange (2022: 195), citation can ascend—like incense—to the level of "reparative enunciation." Such citation is sacred.

"And one cry'd, [Murder] . . ."

Corollary-wise, when an author stumbles upon a plagnored version of their scholarship, they may feel as if a holy place has been desecrated. In a 2020 blog post for *Higher Education*, Nichole Margarita Garcia detailed an experience similar to that of Martínez above, in which she was unfairly accused of plagiarism as an undergraduate. She was "spiritually murdered that day," Garcia (2020) said, crediting Black feminist theorist and legal scholar Patricia Williams (1987) for "first conceptualiz[ing] spirit-murdering as a product of racism which not only inflicts pain, but it is a form of racial violence that steals and kills the humanity and spirits of people of color." Spirit murder has material effects, gradually grinding down and degrading people of color to the point that their life expectancy is adversely affected. Garcia (2020) went on to cite Black abolitionist education scholar Bettina Love and their analysis of minoritized students in the United States, for whom spirit murder entails structurally racist "denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance."

Garcia (2020) was also plagiarized for something she posted online, an intimate violation which took an emotional, affective, and psychic toll:

Both [incidents] left me paralyzed with writers' block. Both challenged my intellectual worth . . . I am angry, but ultimately hurt. This is a generational hurt that many women of color scholars share . . . We can no longer take for granted the scholarship of women of color, rather we need to pay homage to a long line of critical inquiry created on our backs. We have written and verbalized our experiences in academia to the point of suffocating.

Suffocation was also mentioned in a message sent to the Zoom chat of our Spring 2021 "Citation as Complicated Gift" SAR panel. It read in part,

[W]hen I observe the traffic/analytics on my Academia.edu page, I see that my texts are used in teaching. So, while my peers clearly avoid acknowledging or getting in contact with my writing, they are happy to include my texts in their reading lists for courses . . . As a Black scholar who is . . . nearing pension, I feel like I'm suffocating—like I'm being buried alive . . . [I'm] being shut down, and don't know where to turn.²⁷

The anguish that this scholar and Garcia suffered is not uncommon among Black and Latine academics. Threads on Twitter and Facebook detail the nausea and drowning sensations that overcame them when they realized they had been plagnored. They too

found it tough to catch their breaths when glimpsing—or scenting—their uncredited insights in others' publications. They too "cry'd, [Murder]," feeling disrespected, gutted, and drained in ways that compounded the sense of depletion they had from their exploitation in other professional arenas (Pérez, 2023).

Recent studies have uncovered extensive evidence of bias and mistreatment of BIPOC faculty members.²⁸ For example, Isis H. Settles, Nicole Buchanan, and Kristie Dotson (2019: 62) found that,

FOC [faculty of color] experienced hypervisibility when they were treated as *Tokens* and used to represent diversity within the institution, and they felt invisible when they experienced *Social and Professional Exclusion and Epistemic Exclusion* (i.e., lack of recognition for their scholarship and achievements) from colleagues. FOC responded to tokenism and exclusion using three (in)visibility strategies: *Strategic Invisibility* (i.e., disengaging with colleagues while remaining engaged with their scholarly activities) to remove themselves from negative environments; *Working Harder* to prove themselves, counter exclusion, and create positive visibility; and *Disengagement* (i.e., removed effort from work).

To be uncited is to be "unsighted": unseen or actively erased (Sood, 2020). Scholars gradually disappear from databases and other digital archives—"buried alive"—as those who have plagnored them rise to the top of keyword searches. And the gendered politics of citation are such that women of color most frequently sink from view, resulting in a loss of income and status. Their citational erasure has real-world consequences, ranging from salary stagnation to increased precarity for adjunct and contingent faculty due to denial of promotion and tenure.

Women of color often turn to "Working Harder" in an attempt to achieve the recognition they have been denied, thus (further) damaging their physical and mental health. ²⁹ As a corrective, Aja Reynolds, Ree Botts, and Farima Pour-Khorshid (2021: 26) have proposed situating "citational praxis" within a wider-ranging Critical Sisterhood Praxis meant to heal the "mindbodyspirit" of academic WOC. The lingering effects of undercitation on the well-being of Black and Latine scholars are what inspired me to think with Achilles Mbembe in asserting that there is a veritable (necro)politics of citation. Mbembe (2003: 12, 16) situates necropolitics as the inscription of "life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)" through and "in the order of power," when sovereignty is "expressed predominantly as the right to kill" in the context of late modern state violence. Although Mbembe (2003: 20) focuses here on the colonial and imperialist logics that have bequeathed us a "murderous" racist "economy of biopower," the neoliberal university does not operate at a remove from governmental necropolitics. The university can be seen to launder and even intensify the state's excesses (Hulsether, 2018; Mbembe, 2015).

It might seem overblown to cast the university—a home and haven to many of us—as a death-dealing institution. Yet the university is an Althusserian "Ideological State Apparatus" for teachers no less than students (Pavlou, 2019), and the academic motto of "publish or perish" reflects reality for Black and Latine faculty. They are painfully aware of their "overlapping exclusions" (Nair, 2014: 499; Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson,

2019). Perhaps Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2012) put it best, with reference to the plight of Black women:

Universities keep huge endowments, money on reserve, because they are supposed to keep money. They will always tell you they cannot afford you. They will not spend their money to save the life of a Black feminist . . . The universities that we mistakenly label as our bright quirky only refuge for Black brilliance have worked our geniuses to death, and have denied us help when we asked for it. The universities that employed June Jordan, Audre Lorde and so many others, watched cancer eat away at our geniuses, *as* they simultaneously ate away at black women's labor. An institution . . . knows that Black feminists are a trouble more useful as dead invocation than as live troublemakers, raising concerns in faculty meetings. And those institutions continue to make money and garner prestige off of their once affiliated now dead faculty members.³⁰

Gumbs goes on to detail the perceived disposability of Black feminist scholars, such as Lorde, Jordan, and Barbara Christian, within the predominantly white institution (PWI) of higher learning. When scholars go uncited, they cannot demonstrate in personnel reviews that their intellectual labor is more than mere virtue-signaling or navel-gazing. If they cannot "make their bones" in their chosen fields, they cannot eke out a livelihood. They cannot live—buy groceries and pay their rent, utilities, student loans, childcare, and medical bills—to save their lives.

"And addresst them againe to sleepe"?

Imitation is just inspiration. If you feel like taking, just make sure that you cite it.

-Chika, "Industry Games" (2020)

Despite the contemporary appropriation and reactionary distortion of the African American Vernacular English term "woke," the association of wakefulness with moralethical consciousness is centuries old. In the scene from *Macbeth* with which I began, after the drugged guards "addresst them[selves] againe to sleepe," they were killed and framed for the king's murder by the Macbeths. Is it possible to awaken the next generation of scholars to the problem of under-citation, before they themselves are plagnored and brain-picked to death? Can we disrupt the complicity of journals and university presses in the theft of BIPOC intellectual property? Can we be taught to recognize and interrupt "attempted spirit murder" when we see it (Tijerina Revilla, 2021)?

If we say *yes*, we cannot shrink from the fundamental fact that citation has the power to make or break careers. Smith, Williams, Wadud, and Pirtle (2021: 15) pointedly ask, "if citation is currency, how can we ensure Black women creatives are paid?" One culturally resonant way is to entertain the notion of what might be dubbed a "citation sousou." "A sou-sou/susu is a rotating savings club drawn from West African and Caribbean traditions and commonly operated in some U.S. immigrant communities," Kris Franklin (2022: 389) explains. "A group of people commit to putting an equal sum of money into a pool on a regular basis and each collects the full amount paid in by all members when it is their turn." Since "citation is currency," we should make it a point to invest

sociocultural capital in highlighting the scholarship of Black and Latine scholars and loudly object to their exclusion from their peers' works (Mariner, 2022: 217). But for citational praxis to be materially meaningful—and not solely a "transactional" undertaking, like a citation cartel (Shange, 2022: 195; Mariner, 2022: 217; Pérez, 2018)—it must adhere to a strategy of mutual aid that reaches beyond the h-index (Blell, 2023; Mkhwanazi, 2023; Reynolds, Botts, and Pour-Khorshid, 2021).

My closing exhortations have been handed down from the wisdom of colleagues and collectives (Jackson, 2005). "Feminism: we need to cite each other into existence," Sara Ahmed tells us.³² Let's replace the will to knowledge with a will to acknowledge. Embrace a paradigm of care (Thieme and Saunders, 2018).³³ Take a page from Lucumi's book and elevate lesser-known predecessors when crafting syllabi and cranking out publications.³⁴ Emulate the Citation Practices Challenge organized by Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández.³⁵ Professionalize graduate students by training them in equitable methods of citation. Teach them to ask themselves: "What contributions anticipated your analyses?" "How do you know when you are slicing your own salami, or shoplifting someone else's?" Assign literature reviews and exercises that raise awareness of plagnoring, with ample attribution to Lolita Buckner Inniss (Kraus, Breier, Lim, et al., 2022). Quote, if you like, Robert K. Merton (1988: 621):

While many a general reader—that is, the lay reader located outside the domain of science and scholarship—may regard the lowly footnote or the remote endnote or the bibliographic parenthesis as a dispensable nuisance, it can be argued that these are in truth central to the incentive system and an underlying sense of distributive justice that do much to energize the advancement of knowledge.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

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Notes

- 1. On becomes at for the first time in 1824.
- 2. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable encouragement and dialogue of N. Fadeke Castor, Ingie Hovland, and Britt Halvorson throughout the writing of this article. I also extend my sincere thanks to the anonymous reviewer(s) and to Zeba Crook for seeing the special issue through to its publication.

 Indigenous/Native American and Asian scholars in academia are also appallingly under-cited, but in this article I rely only on (1) autoethnographic observations and (2) the testimony of Black and/or Latine academics.

- 4. "Latine" has begun to overtake "Latinx" as the preferred grammatical gender-neutral—in part due to the difficulty of pronouncing a terminal "x" for Spanish speakers—hence my usage here. Please note that when I refer to "Latine" after this point, I include people of African descent whether they use the prefix "Afro-" or not.
- 5. I am exceedingly grateful to be able to use "plagnore" and its permutations with the generous permission of Dr. Buckner Inniss. This article could not have been conceived—much less written—without her coinage of this terminology or consent to use it.
- 6. Nichole Margarita Garcia recounts a similar story, in which she was accused of cheating in the second grade, as the "first time" she was "spiritually murdered" (Garcia and Dávila, 2021: 5).
- 7. In verifying this story with my mother, she reminded me that the teacher hung the story on the wall of our classroom, perhaps as a sort of apology.
- 8. Here I include Black scholars who grew up speaking AAVE.
- 9. As a college sophomore, I wrote to a friend, "I was explaining my pretentious Latinate vocabulary to [poet and essayist] Martín [Espada], and he . . . said my vocabulary is Latinate because I am Latina, because I grew up speaking Spanish." The connection finally clicked. (Thank you, Martín.)
- 10. When this article was under review, I came upon a tweet by political scientist Paulina Ochoa Espejo saying almost exactly the same, but adding crucially that, academics "don't 'cite down': they don't mention good and relevant scholarship when it comes from junior peers or from poorer countries." Twitter, @POchoaEspejo, 10 March 2023, 4:07 p.m., available at https://twitter.com/POchoaEspejo/status/1634299958030663680.
- 11. Unfortunately, this sentiment has become an excuse for plagiarism (Bailey, 2015). As Garcia (2020) writes, "While I am aware that there are no 'new' ideas in academia, but rather 'reinventions,' credit needs to be given where credit is due."
- 12. Wendy Doniger, Bruce Lincoln, and Jonathan Z. Smith were the faculty editors when I arrived at the journal. Matthew Kapstein later replaced Smith. It is impossible to put into words how deeply I was shaped by my time at HR, with heartfelt thanks to these editors and my fellow editorial assistants, Susan Zakin and Stephanie Frank.
- 13. Religious studies never had a #metoo moment. It has not reckoned with the pervasiveness of sexual harassment nor have women achieved citational parity. See Kecia and Serrano, 2022; Plaskow, 2022; Heschel and Imhoff, 2018.
- 14. The quoted phrase is a play on Milan Kundera's 1984 novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. See Ehrenreich, 1991; Mills, 1994; Davis and Mulla, 2023.
- 15. Kampmark (2019) offers tongue-in-cheek advice for would-be salami slicers to avoid being caught: "All hail the maximiser of the minimal . . . Dress your work up as the new . . . At the very least, change the title of your paper."
- 16. Apropos of this, the denouement of the 2011 Israeli film *Footnote* (*He'arat Shulayim*) rests on the detection of a certain characteristic expression in a letter by an anonymous author.
- 17. To use an example from my own work, in the first paragraph of *The Gut: A Black Atlantic Alimentary Tract*, I write, "[T]o be a scholar or practitioner of Black Atlantic traditions—particularly of initiatory ones like Haitian Vodou and Brazilian Candomblé—is to know the head as a vessel for the gods' divine power" (Pérez, 2023: 1). I only realized while preparing the present article that this sentence unwittingly resembles M. Jacqui Alexander's (2005: 297) statement, "To know the body is to know it as a medium for the Divine." While my observation is so anodyne as to be banal—given the preponderance of scholarship on the head in

- "Yorùbá-Atlantic" thought and practice (e.g., Thompson, 1993; Matory, 2005 [1994])—citing Alexander in *The Gut* would have served as a tribute to her impact on my scholarship.
- 18. I am grateful to Zeba Crook for his insights on this and other points.
- 19. The case of Jessica Krug—but one example—is well known (Jackson, 2020). Numerous cases have recently come to light in the United States and Canada of people in academia and the arts (sometimes referred to as "pretendians") falsely claiming to have indigenous ancestry for personal gain; see Kolopenuk, 2023.
- 20. I am tempted to say "brain-picking zombie" here, but have no space in which to unpack the *zonbi*'s Haitian origins and racialized religious history.
- 21. The italics are mine.
- 22. According to O'Callaghan (2007: 5–6), "*The immediacy of one's auditory awareness* The immediacy of one's auditory awareness of ordinary objects does not match that of vision . . . Seeing is believing, we say, but don't believe everything you hear."
- In this, it differs from African American Ifá or isese, which regards contemporary Nigerian practice as the standard for authenticity.
- 24. Other ancestors might well have a greater claim to the transmission of this knowledge, such as Regla-based Ynés Zayas García (Yeye T'Olokun) (Ramos, 2013: 371).
- 25. I am indebted to Matthew Harris for including this quotation in his 2022 University of California, Santa Barbara, PhD dissertation, "Sun Ra, Metaphysical Religion, and the Making of a Black Radical Imagination."
- 26. Shange (2022: 192) connects the dots between allied struggles: "Coined in hashtag form in 2014 by the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (CISPS), #SayHerName draws on longer histories of transfeminist of color organizing like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson's leadership in STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries)."
- 27. I have removed identifying details so as to preserve the scholar's anonymity.
- 28. Additionally, research by BIPOC is supported less often by the National Science Foundation than that of white scholars. See Chen, Kahanamoku, Tripati, et al., 2022.
- 29. When I say "women," I include cisgender, transgender, and Black "non-trans" women (Shange, 2019).
- 30. Italics in the original.
- 31. I am inspired by the treatment of the sou-sou in Gill, 2019.
- 32. Twitter, 19 March 2017, 2:26 p.m., available at https://twitter.com/saranahmed/status/843574390587604994.
- 33. For instance, see the DiSE (Diverse Solidarity Economies) Collective's "A manifesto: Citing is political," focused on the citation of Black feminist political economists, available at https://africanaeconomics.com/politics-of-citation.
- 34. One example would be Alice Walker's efforts to honor Zora Neale Hurston's legacy.
- 35. I found the challenge thanks to Bosanquet, 2019. It officially ended in April 2016 but instructions remain available at http://www.criticalethnicstudiesjournal.org/citation-practices.

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