



Feminist cites: A review of feminist relations to and citations of the canon

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journals.sagepub.com/home/sr**Ingie Hovland** 

Department of Religion and Institute for Women's Studies, University of Georgia, USA

Abstract

What is a feminist citation of the canon in the study of religion? This article reflects on a triangular conversation in Ingie Hovland's research between Hovland herself, Henny Dons (the Protestant feminist she is studying), and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In broader terms, Hovland uses this as an example of the triangular conversations that are convened in the study of religion between scholars, the people or texts they study, and academic canons. The article wrestles with three big questions: why one cites, who one cites, and how one cites. The author reviews a range of possible feminist responses to these questions and, in conclusion, argues for a feminist citation practice that claims the canon.

Résumé

Qu'est-ce qu'une citation féministe du canon dans l'étude de la religion ? Cet article est une réflexion sur une conversation triangulaire dans la recherche d'Ingie Hovland entre Hovland elle-même, Henny Dons (la féministe protestante qu'elle étudie) et Ludwig Wittgenstein. Plus généralement, Hovland utilise cet exemple pour illustrer les conversations triangulaires qui ont lieu dans l'étude de la religion entre les chercheurs, les personnes ou les textes qu'ils étudient, et les canons académiques. L'article aborde trois grandes questions : pourquoi citer, qui citer et comment citer. L'auteur passe en revue une série de réponses féministes possibles à ces questions et, en conclusion, plaide en faveur d'une pratique féministe de la citation qui revendique le canon.

Keywords

Canon, citation, feminism, gender, relations, writing

Mots-clés

Canon, citation, féminisme, genre, relations, écriture

Corresponding author:

Ingie Hovland, University of Georgia, Peabody Hall 19, Athens, GA 30602, USA.

Email: ingiehovland@uga.edu

What might a feminist citation practice look like when engaging with the canon of a discipline—such as the academic study of religion—that has to a certain extent been shaped by patriarchal contexts and mirrors these? This question has been prompted for me by the archival materials that are piled along the top shelf of the bookcase behind me. I am writing a historical ethnography of a Protestant feminist in early 20th-century Norway—Henny Dons—to explore her use of language in life. She was a supporter of global Protestant missions and, at the same time, caught up in the first-wave women's movement in northern Europe. She was part of the grouping that later historians have dubbed the “mission feminists.”

In July 1911, Dons stood behind a lectern outside a wooden church on a hillside facing a few hundred listeners. She was standing in the middle of a picture-postcard scene on the west coast of Norway, with blue mountains behind her plunging all the way down to the dark waters of the Hardangerfjord. The clouds were heavy overhead, and it looked like it might start to rain. She was dressed in the clothing of an upper-middle-class schoolteacher, with long layered skirts and her hair pulled back, and she was about to deliver a talk to participants at the Mission Summer School, who were there to learn about Protestant missions around the world. The organizers of the Mission Summer School had invited 17 plenary speakers: 16 men and Dons. The men had all delivered their talks inside the church, but Dons was not allowed to do so because Norwegian law did not permit women to speak inside church buildings. The organizers nervously sought to create an alternative space for her by placing a lectern in a clearing on the hillside outside the church. They heaved a sigh of relief 20 minutes later when her talk concluded without a drop of rain (Dons, 1911; Rettedal, 1951; Winsnes, 1911).

This instance of Protestant language use by a woman in July 1911 has raised many questions for me. What was shaping Dons' use of words at this moment? What was the impact of her gendered body or of the many images and affects that swirled around the concept of “woman”? What can this moment of speech show us about the difficult coupling of women and words in Protestant Christianity more broadly? If I interpret the moment by drawing on the canon in the study of religion, does that help me understand it better? And what does my citing of the canon to understand Dons tell us about citational relations? For example, I might try out a sentence in the chapter I am drafting:

Draft 1: Dons' speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19).

And I might ask: When I cite a canonical figure, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, in this sentence that is interpreting Dons, what am I doing? Which relations to the canon am I enacting? And are these relations feminist?

In this article, I discuss these questions by retracing some of my own journey of grappling with them. The result is an exploratory review of possibilities for scholars of religion who wish to cite (or not cite) the historical Euro-American theoretical canon in ways that are feminist. I think of the review as exploratory because the discussion on citation in religious studies and my own subfield—the anthropology of religion—is still quite provisional, and we lack a common vocabulary with which to think through these issues. Rather than try to paper over this exploratory quality, I have forefronted it by

repeatedly returning to questions and draft sentences throughout the article, and I hope this helps to highlight the rethinking that is possible at this stage of the conversation. My exploration includes an excess of possible relations to the canon, some of which I have found that I disagree with and some of which I agree with. I include them all here not only because I think a broader review is most useful at this stage, but also—and more importantly—because I think the feminist conversation is stronger if we can continue to describe the multiple different paths that feminists have taken toward, through, and away from the canon. In this spirit, the article’s title—“Feminist cites”—is meant to invoke the fact that feminists have chosen multiple citation practices and have interpreted these from multiple epistemological sites. We do not agree on what a feminist relation to the canon is (or even what a feminist relation is), and I find it useful to consider these differences as part of the ongoing conversation, rather than seeking to eliminate them.

In the first section of this article, I lay out the triangular conversation between myself, Dons, and Wittgenstein as an example of the triangular conversations we convene in the study of religion between ourselves as scholars, the people or texts we study, and our academic canons. While scholars of religion might reasonably disagree about which figures to include in the canon, and while different subfields have their own sub-canons, there are many names that would be broadly recognized as canonical contenders. Some, such as Wittgenstein, might be seen as part of a Euro-American catalog of 20th-century thinkers who are waiting in the wings and may be called on as needed. In fact, since religious studies is a markedly interdisciplinary field that draws scholars using anthropological, sociological, geographical, archeological, historical, literary, philosophical, linguistic, and other approaches, names that are broadly recognized are often some of the only points we have in common. The anthropologist and historian Hillary Kaell (2022: 170–171) sums this up well in her observation that when her religious studies department discusses which authors to include in foundational seminars such as “theory and methods,” one of the simplest solutions is often “to push back into the past . . . my colleagues and I assumed that probably we had all read classics like Durkheim, Otto, Freud, and Foucault. Through these citations, we created a sense of mutual recognition.” Kaell’s point is brought home by the fact that she only needs to mention the last names of these figures without any citations at all and readers of her article in *Religion and Society* will still understand the sentence perfectly (even if they have not, unlike Kaell’s colleagues, actually read Freud). While I use Wittgenstein as an example in this article, then, he can serve as an illustration of the issues raised when we enter into conversation with any number of such broadly recognized figures in the study of religion.

After laying out this conversation, the remaining three sections of the article are focused on three questions: “Why do we cite?”; “Who do we cite?”; and “How do we cite?” Throughout, I am especially interested in different feminist approaches to citing a patriarchally inflected canon, ranging from the attempt to publish without any footnoted citations at all, through the systematic exclusion of white men from the list of works cited, to the use of citations as a collection that can make possible collective work. In the end, I have taken a different path when I cite Wittgenstein to describe Dons; my path, in short, is to choose to claim a tradition that has historically been enacted as an exclusionary space in certain ways and to do so by returning to the canon, repurposing it for my uses. I consider how to claim the value of canonical figures for feminist scholarship

(even as these figures might themselves have disagreed) and how to expand feminist rereadings of these canonical strands of thought that continue to shape our academic lives. Our drafting and revising is one space for this engagement.

A triangular conversation: me, Dons, and Wittgenstein

I turned to Wittgenstein to help me rethink an ongoing discussion in the anthropology of Protestantism. Over the past couple of decades, anthropologists have analyzed Protestant language use as the manifestation of a specific language ideology that prizes disembodied individual sincerity and immediacy. Yet, as Britt Halvorson and I have explored, this only seems to account for some instances of Protestant language use while leaving out others, such as many instances of language use by Protestant women (Halvorson and Hovland, 2021). For example, in the instance of Dons speaking outside the church in July 1911, this moment of language use seems to go far beyond concerns with interiorized sincerity. Instead, her gendered body seems to be a central part of the act of speaking. Some bodies were allowed to speak in certain spaces; others were not.

In thinking through this issue, I turned to Wittgenstein's "a form of life" formulation. He used this phrase, for example, in a conversation with his student Maurice O'Connor Drury in Cambridge in 1930. Wittgenstein had asked Drury to read aloud from *The Golden Bough* by Sir James Frazer (1980), but during the reading Wittgenstein disagreed vehemently with Frazer's interpretation of religious rituals as a type of scientific error. Instead, Wittgenstein wished to impress on Drury (1973: x) that these rites were best understood as "a form of language, a form of life." He used the same term in his *Philosophical Investigations*: "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19). Wittgenstein's "a form of life" formulation has helped me to think in new ways about the religious moment of Dons' speaking, situating this moment as inseparable from life and lively matters (such as, among other things, her body).

However, my turning to Wittgenstein has raised questions for me about what it means to cite him. Wittgenstein's life overlapped with the activities of the mission feminists during the first decades of the 20th century. He periodically retreated to a wooden cabin at the end of another fjord on the west coast of Norway—the Sognefjord—a little further north than the Hardangerfjord where Dons spoke in 1911. And, somewhat resentfully, he was in Cambridge from 1911–1913 and again in the 1930s and 1940s, tilted back in the deckchair he kept in his rooms in Trinity College in the midst of one of the centers of the western academic world. Here, Wittgenstein showed a "general dislike" of women scholars, as his biographer Ray Monk (1990: 498) puts it. There was one exception—namely, the young woman philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe (who later translated *The Philosophical Investigations* into English), whom Wittgenstein gave the personal nickname "old man." At the start of one of his lectures, he is said to have been delighted to discover that some women students who had previously showed up were no longer attending, and turned to Anscombe to remark: "Thank God we've got rid of the women!" (Monk, 1990: 498). While this mistrust of women invading the male spaces of speech was not unusual for early 20th-century Cambridge, I have still spent some time staring out of my office window and considering the fact that Wittgenstein would not have approved of my citing him in my research on Dons. Yet here I am, giving him

this “complicated gift” of citation (Souleles, 2020; see also Weiss, 2018). But does this matter? What does it mean for me to cite him a century later, on the other side of the Atlantic?

This citational question has particular relevance in the study of religion, as it is related to the long-standing discussion about whether to rely primarily on “insider” or “outsider” perspectives in our interpretations (e.g. McCutcheon, 1999). This concern is today more frequently encapsulated in the phrase “taking seriously” (e.g. Pritchard, 2010): How do we take seriously people’s religious worlds when we write about them? For example, am I *not* taking Dons seriously if I use concepts from Wittgenstein to explain her life, since I am using concepts from someone who was in some sense opposed to the ethical project of feminism that she wished to enact? While she and her mission-feminist peers were attempting to link women and words in new ways next to the Hardangerfjord, Wittgenstein did not see any need to attend specifically to women using words as he worked through the problem of language in his cabin on the Sognefjord. Even beyond his own dislikes, and despite his misgivings about Cambridge, he might also in many ways be seen as one representative of European philosophy, which was at the time a scholarly space largely sustained by men and for men. In the bigger picture, philosophy was one expression of the tight bonds between men, language, knowledge, and authority in northern Europe that Dons and the mission feminists were attempting to challenge. In short, Dons had to speak outside the church; Wittgenstein had rooms inside Trinity College. What does this mean for how I might cite Wittgenstein’s “a form of life” concept and connect it to Dons’ speaking body on a hillside in 1911?

Why do we cite? The complications of relations in scholarly worlds

In considering my questions about citing Wittgenstein, I have encountered the thoughtful objection that “the person” is not the same as “the work,” or that “the author” is different from “the text.” If author and text are separated in our current politics of scholarly reading, so this line of thought goes, then I can pick up Wittgenstein’s words and use them in ways he never would have dreamed of, and they are no longer in any strong sense attached to him as a person. This is how texts are perceived to work in the post-structuralist (or, more accurately, post-post-structuralist) humanities and social science departments of the early 21st century, including departments of religious studies. We can go even further and suggest that our theoretical training has taught us that it is actually quite strange to think of an idea in a text as “belonging” to a single individual, given the close, complicated relations that exist between individual expression and social environments, or between knowledge production and historical periods.

Yet when it comes to citation, our current academic practices lag far behind our theory. Has there been any evident impact of our changing understanding of texts on our systems of citation? No; “citation sutures a subject to a voice, a person to (a) work,” anthropologist Kathryn Mariner (2022: 216) observes in her feminist reflection. I have wondered why we still do this. Why can I not use “a form of life” without adding “Wittgenstein”? Why can I not instead simply provide a title without an author—“look for a book called *The Philosophical Investigations*”—or a context—“philosophy,

Cambridge” or “northern Europe, 1930s–1950s”? Why do these alternative references appear imprecise or even chaotic? Why do we insist on suturing a person and a work in our citations when this in many ways runs counter to how we otherwise understand texts today?

Let me start with an answer from 1942 that still holds sway. In the sociological study of scholarly citation, as I learned while writing this article, the “Mertonian” view of citation argues that citation is a reward system. The sociologist Robert Merton proposed that scientists cherish the value of recognizing other scholars’ work, which they think of as original, by giving them credit for it. He observed that scholars are particularly interested in knowing who wrote about an idea first or used a term first, and that we feel a strong sense of obligation to reference either the first author or at least someone in the genealogy since then. This value has recently come under scrutiny because of its mirroring of colonizing practices, and Max Liboiron (2021) has critiqued such “firsting.” However, the view is difficult to escape since it underpins contemporary definitions of plagiarism in the western academy. Merton (1973: 273) also suggested in 1942 that scholarly recognition, such as citations, is “roughly commensurate” with the significance of the contribution. While his claim may perhaps seem somewhat naive in today’s critical discussions of meritocracy, it nevertheless still guides many of our behaviors. Merton’s *The Sociology of Science*, for example, has just over 10,500 citations on Google Scholar, and I have now added another.

Four decades after Merton, Bruno Latour (1987) presented a different view in his book *Science in Action*, observing that scientists’ actual use of citations appears far more messy—and socially shaped—than a reward system. Scientists place citations in their texts as one of several “successive defense lines,” Latour (1987: 48) suggested, to firm up and marshal support for their points and to present these as “science.” They cite to suit their particular needs as they seek to be scientists, which involves a great deal of selection, ignoring, arranging, and shaping of other scientists’ work. From this perspective, citations are a rhetorical device that is used to persuade. “A paper that does not have references,” Latour (1987: 33) tells us, “is like a child without an escort walking at night in a big city it does not know: isolated, lost, anything may happen to it.” Sharrona Pearl (2020) sums up a similar sentiment in her pithy observation that “people cite their friends” as well as “the most dominant, the most famous, and the most powerful.” In other words, people cite people who will aid their defense lines; they cite people who will help them avoid becoming isolated, lost, and unpersuasive. If I were to bear this in mind when looking at the draft sentence I started out with in the introduction, perhaps I might add to it.

Draft 2: Dons’ speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19). While Wittgenstein has not been used much in the anthropology of religion, the latest book by the well-known anthropologist Veena Das (2020) elaborates how his thought can refine our anthropological understandings. In addition, Knut Christian Myhre (2018: 107–108) has recently argued that the much-cited work of anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (e.g. Strathern, 2004) has actually long been deeply Wittgensteinian in its approach.

Latour’s (1987) analysis of defense lines can perhaps tend toward the cynical, raising the question: Do we have to cite at all—or can we opt out? This was the question that was

on the minds of Stefan Hirschauer and Annemarie Mol (1995) a few years later when they attempted to publish a discussion article on the relationship between feminism and constructivism in science and technology studies without using footnoted citations. “Footnotes are a legitimating practice . . . a power game,” they observed (370). Instead of citations, they simply included a list of literature at the end of their article. However, they received the feedback from reviewers that this was a “cute decision” that was “impossible to review seriously” (382n4, 382n5). They concluded that, unless they gave way, “nobody will read us,” and they inserted the footnoted citations after all, unsure as to whether this was “a political defeat” or, alternatively, “a nice, helpful gesture to our readers” (370).

Seven years later, Mol (2002) had thought some more. She now observed that citing can be viewed as an act of “relating to the literature” (22). But it is impossible to relate to everything, to cite everything; it is impossible to make explicit *all* the connections between “a text and its relevant others” (16). Mol ponders this issue, reflecting on how the act of selecting citations is a situating practice: “It may be a way to sketch the ancestry one is shaped by and the elders one seeks to depart from, and these may or may not be the same” (22-23). But she still retains her earlier critique of the type of power that drives this process of selection: “For all of these purposes it is best to relate to literature that has some authority . . . But how do authors ever acquire authority? Answer: by being related to. It is a circle” (22-23).

The problem of selecting citations that Mol discusses has been humorously illustrated by Mariner (2022). In her short experimental essay, she attempts to cite comprehensively. It might be impossible to cite everything, but how many of the influences on her thought can she cite? She ends up referencing not just articles and books, but also phrases from her fieldwork collocutors, conversations with friends, sticky notes, a text message, and, under “S,” “Smith, Christen, and Dominique Garrett-Scott, 2021,” as well as “science fiction,” “the semester from hell,” and “the sound of rain” (219). Our formal systems of citation, she shows us, are hopelessly limited. They may capture (and hide) particular types of relations to certain academic authors, but they are not designed to show the influence of everyone and everything on our thinking, even when that influence has been truly substantial.

Where does this leave us? Why do we cite? At this point in my exploration, I was left with two opposing realizations: our current systems of citation were developed within theoretical frames that were very different from ours and that we may find quite limiting today; at the same time, we cannot individually opt out of them now because they are bound up with our relations. This means, at least for now, that we must cite. Moreover, we cannot cite comprehensively, but must select. And we must consider which citations are recognizable as citations (e.g. we can cite “Smith, Christen, and Dominique Garrett-Scott, 2021,” but not “the sound of rain”). In other words, the question “Why do we cite?” does not have a satisfactory theoretical answer for me, but it does have multiple relational answers that, in many ways, carry more weight. If we wish to relate, we must enter into the complications of how relations are made in our disciplines, including the great relational importance that we attach to citing names.

This disciplinary relating becomes quite involved in practice. For example, in Martin Erikson and Peter Erlandson’s (2014) “taxonomy” of scholars’ own reasons for citing,

we find some of the reasons mentioned above, such as using citations to reward, to support some peers while defending against others, to build an argument that is legible to the discipline, or to delimit one's scope by gesturing to conversations that fall outside it. But Erikson and Erlandson also list other reasons that appear (even) more subject to human desires. They report that authors may try to garner passive support by drawing the name of a prestigious author into their own text even when it is not needed, perhaps in combination with a truism—for example, I could point out that this is easily done because all texts intersect with countless other texts, which would allow me to cite Julia Kristeva (1986). Authors may include “further reading” citations because they believe a long reference list will confer credentials or perhaps out of a wish for readers to be grateful to them. Authors cite for reasons related to what Erikson and Erlandson (2014: 630, 632) call “social alignment” and “mercantile alignment”—for example, scholars cite not only to show their disciplinary identifications, but also to show who they wish to be in the discipline. They cite to reassure readers (or themselves) that they have knowledge. They cite in the hope that those who are cited will cite them in return. They may reluctantly include citations that they anticipate peer reviewers will expect. They sometimes cite articles they have read even when these turned out to be less than relevant because they spent a long time reading them and would like some compensation for their efforts. At other times, they act more efficiently and cite articles after only reading the title.

For all the dryness of Erikson and Erlandson's designation “A taxonomy of motives to cite,” these reasons, collected together, insightfully show us that citation is a site of affect, entangled in the real and imagined affective relations of the author's life and their scholarly world. In the end, I think this is the most meaningful response to the question of why we cite.

Draft 3: Dons' speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19). While Wittgenstein has only been invoked in passing by anthropologists of Christianity (Bandak, 2015: 47, 59; Tomlinson and Engelke, 2006: 9–11), I think a closer engagement with his approach to language as “a form of life” can help nuance current understandings of Protestant language use which argue that Protestants are guided by “a Protestant semiotic ideology” that aims at dematerialization (Keane, 2007: *passim*; see also Engelke, 2007; Meyer, 2011; a helpful discussion can be found in Bialecki and Hoenes del Pinal, 2011; this lens draws on Peirce's approach to language as “signs,” e.g. see Peirce, 1991, which in many ways runs counter to Wittgenstein's orientation to language in and as “life”).

At this point, I have already broached the next question. If we must cite to relate in the midst of the complex ways in which we make social and affective relations in our disciplines, who do we cite?

Who do we cite? The different desire lines of different feminisms

I first encountered Wittgenstein in a canonized setting during my PhD studies, through his excerpted remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough* in Michael Lambek's (2002) *A Reader*

in the *Anthropology of Religion*. I still remember where I was when I read this excerpt. I had wandered all the way up to one of the top floors of one of the London libraries, and I had found a small scratched-up table placed by itself behind a long row of bookshelves, under a window looking out on a dreary sky. That was the table where I remember reading of religious practitioners that “it never does become plausible that people do all this out of sheer stupidity,” and opening up my old copy of the *Reader* again today, I see that I jotted an exclamation mark in the margin next to “why the attempt to find an explanation is wrong”. (Wittgenstein, 2002: 86). I did not underline the sentence that I am now more drawn to: “We can only *describe* and say, human life is like that” (Wittgenstein, 2002: 86). And I do not remember reflecting even for a moment that day on how it was that I came to be reading Wittgenstein in the first place, in that edited reader, during that stage of my doctoral program, in that library, at that table.

Under the headings “Bodies doing things” and “Feminist tables,” the feminist theorist Sara Ahmed (2010: 244–254) describes how a table may seemingly draw certain bodies for certain activities. Through a reading of Martin Heidegger’s (1999) reflections on a table in a room that allows people who come into contact with it to do things—write, eat, sew, play—she reconsiders this situation from a gendered perspective and asks how the table in turn does things to the people. Which bodies “tend” to be oriented toward the table as a writing table, she asks, and what happens when they take up this orientation? Perhaps, she muses, “the table waits for some bodies more than others” (Ahmed, 2010: 250–251). The same notion was expressed almost a century earlier by Virginia Woolf (2000: 48–50) when she explained that we have the works of Shakespeare but not Shakespeare’s sister because when Shakespeare’s sister picked up a book (Woolf imagines), she was told to mind the stew, and what she wrote she hid far away from any table. When she ran away from marriage to act in London (Woolf embellishes), it ended tragically before she had time to become a cornerstone of the European literary canon. Therefore, four centuries after Shakespeare’s sister, when I found a table in a London library and opened a reader on the anthropology of religion, it is interestingly unremarkable that I was able to read Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer rather than Wittgenstein’s sister’s remarks on Frazer’s sister. The table draws certain citations; citational histories draw certain bodies.

Ahmed (2017: 15) herself has modeled one feminist response to canonical citational histories—namely, to tread new paths, “paths we can call desire lines, created by not following the official paths laid out by disciplines.” She takes the term “desire lines” from landscape architecture, where it refers to the paths that people make when they deviate from the designated walkway and, for example, cut across a lawn. While Ahmed’s work on feminist tables engages with Heidegger, she treads a different desire line in her book *Living a Feminist Life*, in which she decided not to cite any white men. She thinks of white men in this context not primarily as individual authors but as “an institution,” and rather than tying her citations to this institution, she sought instead to cite “work that has been too quickly (in my view) cast aside or left behind, work that lays out other paths” (Ahmed, 2017: 15). This continues her earlier line of thinking about how citation is “a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies” (Ahmed, 2013). Why, she challenges feminists, do we repeatedly frame our conversations with each other “in relation to a male intellectual tradition,” and why do

we demonstrate that we know our place through giving “allegiance or love to this or that male theorist” (Ahmed, 2013)? Ahmed offers one possible feminist response to the canon: do not (always) cite it.

Draft 4: Dons’ speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” a lived event that takes a certain shape in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19), having grown together into that shape in that space (see Ahmed, 2010: 248, on “feminist tables”).

Which feminism is this? Ahmed has been a central thinker in the recent turn to affect, and her work on citation builds on her critical phenomenological scholarship. But her thinking also resonates with previous feminist responses of the 20th century. Let me mention three brief glimpses into how feminist authors have grappled with the canon before Ahmed and have come to similar conclusions, showing how long this has been a live issue in feminist thought.

First, let us return to Woolf and British liberal feminism in the early 20th century. In 1928, Woolf presented papers at Girton and Newnham, two women’s colleges in Cambridge, about a woman writer who needed a room of her own. Before one of her talks, she tried to enter one of the Cambridge libraries, but was barred by a “flutter of black gown” because she was an unaccompanied lady. She cursed that library (Woolf, 2000: 9–10). A little later, she delivered her talk, urging her audience:

I must ask you to imagine a room, like many thousands, with a window looking across people’s hats and vans and motor cars to other windows, and on the table inside the room a blank sheet of paper on which was written in large letters WOMEN AND FICTION, but no more. (Woolf, 2000: 27)

The room evoked not only the practicalities of having a place and time to write, but also a certain freedom to think differently, to not remain dependent on entering a library filled with books authored by men that one could not enter without a man. This desire to have “a room of one’s own” has continued to appear in feminist conversations, including in certain strands related to the study of religion. For example, in the 1990s, the feminist post-theologian Mary Daly would not allow men into her class on feminist ethics at Boston College because, she explained to the *Washington Post*, men are so “disruptive” when a class of young women are trying to do intellectual work. One of her women students expressed appreciation, telling the reporter that “women need to claim their own space” (Ferdin, 1999). In sum, feminists who take this path assert that women need to talk to and about each other.

Second, let us consider the French feminists of the 1970s. Going beyond the practicalities of “a room of one’s own,” the French feminists turned instead to the more foundational question of whether women’s experience can be expressed in male-centered language at all. If the European university canon has been built using patriarchal language, what is the place of women? The “feminine” has “no possible place” in western philosophical discourse, Luce Irigaray (1985: 68) argued, as she grappled with an apparent masculine–feminine hierarchy built into the very structure of our scholarly thought.

Around the same time, Hélène Cixous (1976) suggested that a wholly new mode of expression was needed—an *écriture féminine* (often translated “women’s writing”), in which she experimented with unconventional ways of using language to capture the knowledge of female bodies in text. Here, the feminist problem goes far beyond that of citation, as scholarly expression itself needs to be rethought and redone. From this perspective, it would not make much difference if I continued to revise the citations in my sentences on Dons; what I would need to do instead would be to reimagine the entire project.

~~Deleted draft: Dons’ speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19).~~

A third feminist response to the canon, which was different again, was articulated by Black feminist and womanist intersectionality theorists in the USA in the 1980s. One of the most cited lines to come out of this work is a cutting one by Audre Lorde (1984: 112) “*the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.*” Lorde delivered this line in an address to a gender studies conference that was attended overwhelmingly by white American women academics, which, in Lorde’s view, had resulted in a situation in which “the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy” (110–111). She admonished the attendees for not including Black women’s texts on their reading lists. We might imagine that perhaps they included Woolf, Daly, and Irigaray, but for Lorde this inclusion had itself been absorbed into, and expressed, the workings of a racist patriarchal canon. Alice Walker (1983: xi) described some of the same sentiment in the same time period, though with a different emphasis, when she coined the term “womanist”: a womanist, she suggested, was a Black feminist or feminist of color. In her definition, she both claimed and subverted the folk expression used by Black American women to girls—“You acting womanish”—which drew attention to outrageous, courageous behavior and a desire to know more. Walker (1983: xii) expressed the vibrancy of this desire in another oft-cited line: “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.” Lorde and Walker both insisted on the need to rethink relations to the canon again, urging feminist or womanist writers to drop the master’s tools and build an altogether different house with different tools, different knowledge, *more* knowledge.

I have mentioned only some 20th-century feminist responses to the question of how to relate to the canon: a room of one’s own; no possible place; the master’s tools. They point toward the same pressing concern that Ahmed (2013, 2017) has considered more recently: What good is the canon? Or rather, how bad is it? And how can we do without it?

~~Draft 5: Dons’ speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” an everyday life event in which her Christian speaking body was shut out (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19), an experience that had been intimately familiar to Christian women in northern Europe for the previous nine centuries.~~

The conversation about who to cite—or rather about who not to cite—is still ongoing, and in a recent response to Ahmed, Black studies scholar Katherine McKittrick

(2021) has moved it in a different direction. She values Ahmed's attention to how citation practices are gendered and racialized, and how this shapes not only what we know but how we know it. At the same time, she suggests moving away from a focus on excluding names from the works cited based on an identity category, such as white men. Addressing herself primarily to Black studies, McKittrick (2021) argues for using the lens of "struggle . . . entangled with identities-places-embodiments-infrastructures-narratives-feeling" (30). In her critique of the white-dominated canon, she holds that it is still possible to assemble a heterogeneous list of works cited that altogether yields an understanding of, and works toward, liberation (28). McKittrick therefore refers to citation as a practice of "arranging, rearranging, and collecting" (15), an underpinning for working "collectively" (28). She elaborates on this image of collecting:

The works cited are many and various divergent and overlapping texts, images, songs, and ideas that may not normally be read together. The works cited, all of them, when understood as *in conversation* with each other, demonstrate an interconnected story that resists oppression. (28)

I might say that McKittrick shifts the question from "Who do we cite?" to "Who do we cite together?" In her text, citing is collecting. Her answer is not a version of "Do not cite X" but rather, in paraphrase, "What happens if we cite X together with Y and Z?" We rework relations and create new ones through the collections of citations that we arrange.

Draft 6: Dons' speaking outside the church can be seen as "a form of life" in which her body and words cannot be separated (drawing on the philosopher of language, Wittgenstein, 2009: §19). Or perhaps her speaking on the hillside can be seen as a "throwntogetherness," a lively space in which the trajectories of several entities—public Protestantism, women's words, women's bodies—were thrown together for a moment (drawing on the feminist geographer, Massey, 2005: 151). Thinking through Wittgenstein's "form of life" alongside Massey's "throwntogetherness" raises the question: How did this form of life change its form?

In the end, this sequence of feminist responses to the canon has raised a question for me in turn: To whom does the canon belong? To whom, for example, does Wittgenstein belong? Whose is the citation "Wittgenstein"?

My colleague Carolyn Medine has recounted a memory of Charles Long engaging with this question as a Black religious studies academic:

One of my early formational moments as a scholar was a Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion (SECSOR) meeting. I do not remember the year, but I remember the moment. Dr. Long gave a paper—on what I cannot now remember—using Western philosophy and African American thought. Someone, in the question and answer period, complimented Long but suggested that his work needed a more Afrocentric center. I remember how Dr. Long stood still for a moment . . . Then, he slammed his hand on the table, and he said, "Kant is *mine!*" (Hegel is *mine!*) (Medine, 2021: 8)

This is a different way of using the table—slamming one's hand on it. The unexpected thud shifts the question from "Who do we cite?" to "Whose is this citation?"

While I have learned something from each of the previous feminist approaches, my own answer to the question of who to cite considers instead how I can use my feminist writing table to express some of the same view that Long held: Kant and Hegel were his; Wittgenstein is mine. This is a different desire line—a desire to claim, or a desire to belong without having to justify one’s belonging, or perhaps a desire to do as one desires.

Back to Draft 1: Dons’ speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19).

While the questions of why and who we cite have received the most attention in conversations on citation, there is a third question that has not been much discussed—namely, “How do we cite?” How do we connect ideas, texts, and authors when we write? It is perhaps understandable that this question has not been much discussed with regard to citation because it quickly opens up a much larger and slightly different set of questions around what theory is, how we make it, and whether and when to use it. Yet it seems to me that the question of how we cite can also be explored in a more focused manner, and that, if we do so, it carries considerable practical promise.

How do we cite? The connections we make in our texts

“There is a manifold of faces with common features that keep surfacing here and there,” Wittgenstein insisted as he contemplated how *he* would describe the fire festivals that he thought Frazer misunderstood so badly; “And what one would like to do is draw lines that connect the components in common” (Wittgenstein, 2018: 58). This act of connecting was an act of understanding, in his view: “the understanding that consists just in this: that we ‘see the connections’” (Wittgenstein, 2018: 47, my translation; see also Wittgenstein, 2009: §122).

In my relation with Wittgenstein, I have come to be persuaded by his view that connecting is a type of understanding. I still have critical questions about his idea of how connections surface, as well as his emphasis on “seeing,” but I have nevertheless found his view helpful for considering which connections I make when I write, how I make them, and what understanding that yields. How we make connections with other texts in our texts shapes how we understand, and a central aspect of making those connections is through citations. Therefore, even though the question of how we cite is the most unwieldy of the questions I address here, I think it is interesting to at least scratch the surface of the different ways we might cite—that is, the different ways we might make connections to form understanding. Let me mention three possible ways: criss-crossing, contrapunting, and circuiting.

First, criss-crossing. Das (2015: 57) has picked up Wittgenstein’s (e.g. 2009: §66) concept of “criss-crossing” in her discussion of how theoretical concepts grow within particular forms of life and what gives these concepts “life.” Das (2020) uses this approach to think about how concepts are generated in anthropology, suggesting that anthropologists bring together their ethnographic research and their intellectual milieu and, in the process, constitute “a form of life,” and that it is in this form of life that anthropological

concepts arise (275). She suggests that the resulting “crisscrossing of vernacular concepts with anthropological ones” (278) is a way of “extending” a concept, as Wittgenstein put it:

And we extend our concept . . . as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. (Wittgenstein, 2009: §67)

As an example, Das discusses how the concept of “God” has been applied in classic—we might even say canonical—anthropological works on the religious worlds of the Azande, the Nuer, and the Dinka (Evans-Pritchard, 1970, 1976; Lienhardt, 1961). In these works, Godfrey Lienhardt and EE Evans-Pritchard chose to use terms such as “Divinity” or “spirit,” which were extended from Christian traditions of thought. Das (2020: 295) asks us to consider a thought experiment: How might the vernacular concepts among the Dinka, Nuer, and Azande have been described if the anthropologists had instead extended their anthropological concept of “God” from contexts that dealt with gods or goddesses that were “as ephemeral as other things” or characterized not only by goodness and justice but also capriciousness and sexual appetites? In these hypothetical scenarios, the vernacular and anthropological concepts might have criss-crossed differently, yielding a different understanding of these religious worlds. This critique is related to anthropologist Marilyn Strathern’s suggestion that we should engage with theoretical concepts not by applying them but by taking them to the group we wish to understand—for example, in Melanesia:

If Melanesians had the will and the patience to read Latour, what would they be able to say about it? . . . One should not think about what a [Latourian] network is in Melanesia, but what a [Latourian] network would be for a Melanesian. (Viveiros de Castro and Goldman, 2017: 191–192)

If I were to cite to connect in a criss-cross manner, what might my draft sentence look like?

Draft 7: Dons’ speaking outside the church could be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated, if I use Wittgenstein (2009: §19) to understand Dons. But if I use Dons (1908: 12) to understand Wittgenstein, I might turn to her formulation “If prayer stops, life stops,” which indicates that the relation she sees between language and life goes beyond Wittgenstein’s “form of life.” What does this “criss-crossing” (Das, 2020: 278; Wittgenstein, 2009: §66) of “life” concepts—Wittgenstein’s concept on the one hand, Dons’ concept on the other—tell us about “life” in the moment of Dons’ Protestant speaking?

Second, *contrapunteo*. *Contrapunteo* is the act of playing two different lines of melody at the same time in the same musical piece, and this way of connecting can be found in anthropologist Bruno Reinhardt’s (2015: 406) “contrapuntal analysis.” Reinhardt suggests that we might think about theory as a Deleuzian “line of flight” in, out of, and around a situation that also generates other lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). For example, in his work on Pentecostal Christianity, Reinhardt proposes that

Pentecostalism might be thought of as a line of flight—or a line of practices, ideas, and commitments—coming out of late-modern capitalism in the same way that the work of Gilles Deleuze comes out of this same context. Based on this observation, Reinhardt moves away from applying concepts from Deleuze to explain Pentecostalism, and he instead shows how we might use Deleuze and Pentecostalism in a contrapuntal arrangement, highlighting themes in Deleuze and Pentecostalism that echo each other. This is a different way again of making connections in a scholarly text.

If I were to arrange Wittgenstein and Dons in a contrapuntal analysis, it would remind us that Wittgenstein's words were not produced by a disembodied mind or in social isolation, despite his attempts to escape to his Norwegian cabin. Both Wittgenstein and Dons came out of the same context of early 20th-century northern Europe—a context characterized by political change, especially the expansion of democratization across a broader range of society, coupled with the so-called “high age” of the British Empire. For example, Wittgenstein considered the rituals of people in colonized parts of the world as reported by Frazer and thought they were the same type of thing that he saw around him in England. The mission feminists also thought about relations between people on opposite sides of the world, but through the prism of an evangelical salvation that, in their view, was needed by all of humanity. If we place Wittgenstein and Dons together in this context, we might see more clearly how they each in different ways illuminate the coupling of northern European liberalism and imperialism at this time.

Draft 8: Dons' speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated. I take the term “form of life” from Wittgenstein (2009: §19), who also lived and thought in northern Europe in the early 20th century. In different ways, Dons and Wittgenstein both furthered and resisted the conjoining of liberalism and colonialism that was enacted so forcefully in northern Europe at this time—for example, in missions, in feminisms, and in universities (on the earlier emergence of this conjoining around the turn of the 19th century, see Lowe, 2015).

Third, circuiting. If we think of an anthropologist-author as, in Strathern's (2004: 54) image, a cyborg-like web of relations, “a circuit of connections,” we might ask: Which connections run through the citer? What are the relations that make up my citing of Wittgenstein, and how do they affect how I cite him? These connections are complicated. The room I have been given to use as an office on campus, with a table and a window, and the time I have to engage in conversations in the study of religion stand in some relation to the historical European university tradition. And my research on Dons is a project about language use in life in a particular tradition of white religious feminism—a microcosm of the entangled histories of Protestantism, liberalism, imperialism, and first-wave feminism in early 20th-century northern Europe. My understanding of feminism is a result of how the histories of feminism were shaped by this entanglement a century ago. The project has helped me think about the difficulties of feminism, how it has come together, and how it has been nudged into motion in different circuits, including in my own writing and teaching today.

Draft 9: Dons' speaking outside the church can be seen as “a form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (Wittgenstein, 2009: §19). This unconventional joining of her

body and words can be seen as a feminist moment, yet I think of it as a “difficult feminism”—difficult because it is difficult for today’s western, secular, academic feminism to acknowledge such speeches about worldwide salvation as part of its own histories. Conversely, my own feminist approach, dwelling on relational entanglements, would have been experienced as a “difficult feminism” by Dons. And that is nothing compared to the difficulties it would have raised for Wittgenstein.

In my particular project, these subjects—Dons and Wittgenstein and their circuits of connections—connect and run into each other as I draw them together in my own circuit, even as they pull apart. I think that the citations I connect can open up some new relational possibilities, but at the same time they also reproduce, and rework, some of the contradictions and difficulties that already come with feminism and its histories.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to cite is to relate. Feminists have explored a variety of ways of using citations as relations, or as anti-relations, to the historical Euro-American theoretical canon in the field of religious studies and beyond. They have engaged with it and departed from it. They have experimented with defense lines and desire lines. They have attempted to affect the paths of the canonical tradition as we extend it. I have argued for a feminist citational practice that relates to the canon by claiming it, by repurposing it for feminist uses today. However, I see this as one possible feminist citational practice rather than the only feminist practice. Although I do not agree with all the feminist approaches I have reviewed here, I think it is useful for our scholarly work to value an excess of feminist responses even as we disagree. We will likely continue to tread several feminist paths toward, through, and away from the canon, and it will be helpful to continue to talk about each of their relational difficulties.

This leaves only one last underlying question in my own attempt to use Wittgenstein to understand Dons: Who is it that we are citing? So far, I have treated the citation “Wittgenstein” as having an obvious referent, but before ending I wish to draw attention to the fact that it does not. Let me take a final brief detour through *The Philosophical Investigations*, which will take me to my final draft sentence.

Wittgenstein (2009: §43) suggested that we cannot understand a word by approaching it as a stable mental object; instead, we understand it by looking at instances of “use.” The word may have many uses, and these may not all fit a general law:

Consider, for example, the activities that we call “games”. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, athletic games, and so on. What is common to them all?—Don’t say: “They *must* have something in common, or they would not be called ‘games’”—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them, you won’t see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! (Wittgenstein, 2009: §66)

Now consider, for example, the citation that we call “Wittgenstein.” If we ask “what is common” to all Wittgenstein citations, we “won’t see something that is common to *all*.” Quite apart from the fragmented nature of much of Wittgenstein’s writing, his words

have not lived on over time by themselves. Rather, they have lived on in ongoing relations with his discipline, in the shifting material forms in which they were collected for publication, and then in the many ways they were engaged in texts by others. This repositions the meaning of the citation “Wittgenstein” in its “use.” There may be affinities that “criss-cross” the instances of use (Wittgenstein, 2009: §67), but there will not be any single thread that runs through all these instances.

For example, Wittgenstein used the vague term “form of life” only a few times (e.g. see Drury, 1973: x; Wittgenstein, 2009: §19), and it has been elaborated in quite different directions. I have been drawn to the interpretation of the literary theorist Toril Moi (2017: 54–61), who sees Wittgenstein’s forms of life as bringing together social life forms with biological and physical life forms (influenced by the ordinary language philosophy of Cavell, 1999). In the end, this particular use of a particular version of Wittgenstein—a particular “Wittgenstein”—led to the final draft sentence in my chapter:

Draft 10, final: Dons’ speaking outside the church can be seen as a “form of life” in which her body and words cannot be separated (e.g. Drury, 1973: x; Wittgenstein, 2009: §19). This form of life, or life form, joins social forms with physical ones, material forms with linguistic ones (Moi, 2017: 54–61).

There are still further differentiations in use since, unlike Moi, in my work on Dons, I extend this line of interpretation into the current conversation on feminist new materialism—a conversation that is particularly interested in thinking through the inseparability of materiality and language (e.g. Hekman, 2008; for a critique, see Moi, 2017: 13–14). Through my own material-feminist extension of Wittgenstein, I will continue to consider relations between words and bodies through questions such as: How is language in our life tied up with material life, whether in a moment in which a Protestant woman speaks under heavy clouds on a hillside outside a church or in the action of writing “Wittgenstein” into a sentence at a table under a window in a campus office? Looking at the citation “Wittgenstein” in its use is indeed a process in which “we twist fibre on fibre” (Wittgenstein, 2009: §67).

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ORCID iD

Ingie Hovland  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2926-6326>

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