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Citation and Recitation in Mystical Scholarship and Om's Drone Metal

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ABSTRACT

In this article I compare the uses of texts designated 'mystical' in two traditions: the academic study of religions and the heavy metal music genre of drone metal. Rather than attempting to define mysticism, I review the ways in which quotations of texts have been employed in academic studies on mysticism, noting that many scholarly works devoted to understanding and categorising previous mystical texts have later been designated mystical themselves. Then, taking as a case study a recent album by drone metal group Om, I examine the related ways of reusing religious texts, sounds, symbols and practices in drone metal music, culture and discourse. I compare and contrast the uses of such texts, sounds, symbols and themes in both traditions, and the implications of their differing epistemological and cultural status. Setting up and then undermining a division between two kinds of textual reference in citation and recitation, I suggest that 'mysticism' in drone metal and in mystical scholarship is constituted through both uses. In a final example, I show how a webpage of listener comments attached to an online clip of Om's music displays a range of these 'mystical' textual practices.

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[In this paper I quote several online sources from internet comment threads, and other informal discussions. Particularities of capitalisation, spelling and grammar have not been altered, and are reproduced as they appear online.]

Introduction

Scholars of mysticism in religious studies have, since at least the late 19th Century, compiled and anthologised citations and fragments of texts designated 'mystical' into their own works: writings which themselves display many of the same elements that they categorise as mystical in the texts they present and transform. In turn, scholarly works on mysticism are cited and quoted in later works in the same tradition, but often explicitly or implicitly re-presented as 'mystical' texts. For example, mystical traces in the writings of Evelyn Underhill, R.C. Zaehner and others are collected by Jeffrey Kripal in his book *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom* (2002); Georges Bataille's

writings on the ecstatic are read by Amy Hollywood to have themselves “become ‘operations’ of ecstasy” (Hollywood, 2002, p.59). Michel de Certeau’s work presents fragments of texts from St. Teresa, Diego de Jesus, John of the Cross and others, exploring mysticism as “manners of speaking” (Certeau, 1992, pp.113-150). His own texts have subsequently been read as mystical, and these readings are then reported in introductions which preface translations or edited selections of his work (e.g. Conley, 1988 p. xxi and Giard, 2000, p.21; see also Coggins, 2013, pp.22-24).

Perhaps the only surprising feature of Evelyn Underhill’s dictum “Only mystics can really write about mysticism” (1911, p.49) then, is that it would appear to refer to herself as well as others: elsewhere, the disclaimer is a frequent characteristic of texts read as mystical, from Saint Teresa’s statement “I think I have but little to say that has not already been put forth in my other works” (1944, p.36) to Michel de Certeau’s book which “stands exiled from its subject matter” (1992, p.1). Similarly, Jeffrey Kripal’s bold statement “I no longer want to study mystical literature. I now want to write it” (2006, p.15) might be challenged for unnecessarily dividing writing from studying, both constitutive practices of this mystical tradition, rather than for his claims to participate in it. These texts are collections of readings, expressed in writing, in order to be read; they take their places in a tradition constituted by the textual practices of a mystical scholarship. I use the deliberately ambivalent phrase ‘mystical scholarship’ to undermine any clear distinction between, on one hand, mysticism as an ostensibly external object of study, and, on the other, as a mode of textual practice in writings which purport to be (merely) “about” mysticism. Discourse on mysticism becomes mystical discourse.

Similar textual practices of reading and writing, of referencing, citation and performance of mystical symbols occur in drone metal, an extreme subgenre of heavy metal. Performances, recordings and surrounding discussions of drone metal display a sustained engagement with mystical texts and practices from a range of traditions. These include the inclusion in recordings and performances of mantras, chants and Islamic prayers; recitation of sacred texts relating to the *Bhagavad-Gita* and to ancient pagan sites; uses of concepts and ideas from the Qabbalah, the book of Revelation, and Persian Sufi poem *The Conference of the Birds*; lyrical and visual references to pilgrimage, holy mountains and meditation; performances in Jerusalem, Egyptian temples and Christian cathedrals. All are combined and deployed in an experimental form of music founded in, yet often departing from, the symbolic codes of heavy metal. Audiences often respond to drone metal’s sonic, symbolic and textual references to mystical religion in related rhetoric, performing their own readings of drone metal experience in writing and commentary which call upon engagements with other spiritual and musical sounds, other religious texts, practices and rituals, other memories and languages, to understand and communicate about the mysticism of sound and text.

Here I investigate the construction, appropriation, and transformation of ‘mystical’ texts in both religious studies scholarship and in drone metal,

focusing in particular on one recording and its reception, the 2012 album *Advaitic Songs* by the band Om. I suggest that the academic study of mysticism and drone metal can both be read/heard as mystical traditions, and I compare the effects and implications of these transformative practices on the texts, symbols and sounds they cite and recite, in their respective scholarly and musical idioms. I begin by identifying tendencies in academic works on mysticism. These include the anthologisation of fragments of disparate texts, ways of prescribing how to read these recontextualised citations, constructions of authority and propriety in citation, and the arrangement of citations and quotations in the service of particular hierarchies and essentialisms. Then, I review similar uses of texts, sounds, and symbols by Om and their listeners, considering the implications of the differing cultural and institutional settings of mysticism. The former texts are academic projects of knowledge-production, while the latter sound recordings and performances are productions of a popular music culture industry. By contrast with academic books, claims to scholarly epistemological status are rarely made for records or musical concerts. However, the culture industry's productions are acknowledged to play important roles in, for example, formation and maintenance of individual and group identities.

In order to highlight assumptions about the different kinds of textual productions, I outline an artificial distinction between 'citation' and 'recitation,' between epistemological uses of antecedent text fragments in scholarship and performative and participatory uses of text fragments in music. Then, I dissolve the opposition, showing that citation and recitation are never distinct, and suggesting that more attention might be paid to recitative characteristics in academic work. I then introduce a final example of intertextual mystical exegesis: an online discussion of Om's album, in which practices of texts are prescribed, reported and enacted, in which propriety and authority are negotiated, in which citation and recitation are intertwined, and mystical tradition is constituted and continued.

Citation in Mystical Scholarship

Michel de Certeau, scholar of both historiography and mysticism, investigates the ways in which the writing of history is produced: not only through analysis and interpretation of documents, but also in the editing, framing and even physical creation of those documents, a labour which is often then hidden from view. Certeau describes the split structure of the text between arranged quotation fragments and authorial commentary, highlighting the legalistic echo in citation by presenting the process as a calling-in of expert witnesses to testify to the truth of the historian's discourse. Historiographical discourse, he writes,

is constructed according to a problematic of procedure and trial, or of citation, that can at the same time 'subpoena' a referential language that acts therein as a reality, and judge it in the name of knowledge. (Certeau, 1988:94)

Such practices of citation can be seen in various mystical anthologies. A classic example is Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945). On the first page, Huxley constructs in advance the unity he will then 'discover' in the texts he has compiled. "The thing is immemorial and universal" (Huxley, 1945, p.1): universal in his own interpretive mode, certainly; and in a sense immemorial also, in the un-remembering, or exclusion of the processes of selection and editing that took place in order to fit the fragments into the framework. On one double-page, for example, Huxley has arranged quotations from John Smith the Platonist, Eckhart, Yogavisthsva, the Diamond Sutra, The Book of Common Prayer, the Upanishads, Rumi and St. Bernard, without details of the textual source, translation or context, let alone the specificities of the distinct traditions in which each author produced their texts (Huxley, 1945, pp.212-3). These practices, consciously or not, serve particular ideologies while lacking any reflexive acknowledgement that meanings are determined as much by their selection, editing and new juxtapositions as the all-but ignored original contexts of the quotations. Texts are presented and admired, but always in the service and under the logic of the new text. Sometimes citations and quotations are included primarily in order to show the priority of one specific religious tradition or theory. While Huxley, for example, mobilised his sources to validate his own universal theory (Huxley, 1945), his interlocutor R.C. Zaehner arranged his sources to portray a hierarchy with his own Roman Catholicism at the top, his motivations already outlined in his title *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Zaehner, 1957), while Huxley validated his own universal theory (Huxley, 1945). At times, citation is less a juridical subpoena and more like a kidnapping, with texts forced to pay tribute to a colonizing ideology, be it, for example, Catholic supremacy or 'scientific' psychological reductionism.

Propriety in citation can be controversial. Grace Jantzen highlights that William James took almost all of his quotes from another, already decontextualized, compilation (Jantzen, 306); though elsewhere Jantzen is herself criticised for selectively reading James, in a paper which itself traces a history of 'mysticism' as intellectual construct (Schmidt 2003, 274-5); Amy Hollywood, addressing Michel de Certeau's *The Mystic Fable* (1992), quotes the same poem as Certeau, noting that "curiously, he does not give the title," before in the next sentence incorrectly naming Certeau's translator Michael B. Smith as Daniel (confusing the Biblical visionary with the vision, perhaps?) (Hollywood, 2012, p.198). My own redeployments can and should be similarly questioned. As well as testifying for the author who cites them, quotations are always framed by implied or suggested ways of reading both the texts from which they are taken and the wider discourses which surround them. In addition, writers often explicitly prescribe ways of reading their texts, or the texts they quote and cite, or other related materials: William James writes of his "philosophic conclusions" that "the reader who desires immediately to know them should turn to pages 511-519" (James, 1985, p. xxxv), while Huxley includes a "List of Recommended Books" (1945, pp.303-6). The texts of mystical scholarship manage their quotes and citations through selection, editing and presentation, through artificial but then hidden and therefore 'naturalised' juxtapositions, through explicit and implicit direction of reading practices, through negotiations of authority and propriety, and through

arranging citations according to particular frameworks. I turn now to how these textual practices are evident, in altered ways, in drone metal.

Drone Metal and the Study of Mysticism

Drone metal emerged in the 1990s, when a few musicians from the West Coast of the United States, Japan and elsewhere took a radical approach to what they perceived to be the key elements of heavy metal (distorted, bass-heavy guitar tones and slow, crushing riffs). Songs frequently drone on past half an hour in length, with sonic developments in tracks occurring at glacial pace. Seattle band Earth's *2: Special Low Frequency Version* (1993) was an early landmark, its three long tracks eschewing conventional melody and song structure in favour of long, drawn-out, fuzzy guitar noise, with an occasional submerged drum thump the only other instrumentation. Japan's Boris situated their similarly distorted hour-long track *Absolutego: Special Low Frequency Version* (1996) in relation to Earth's album in sound as well as subtitle. Sleep's *Dopesmoker* (2012 [1996]) was another influential one-track, hour-long monolith, with its alternate title *Jerusalem* hinting at a conflation of extreme sound, altered states of consciousness and religious ritual in the emerging subgenre. From the later 1990s to the present, SunnO))) have gained a wider critical reception with their notoriously gruelling live performances and experimental additions to the fundamental heavy drone sound (see, for example, *Monoliths & Dimensions*, 2009). Other bands have developed their own styles (which one listener described as "flavours of drone") such as Menace Ruine's alchemical meditations between noise and folk (e.g. *The Die is Cast*, 2008), Nadja's more electronic and effects-laden approach (e.g. *Thaumogenesis*, 2007), and Newcastle-based Bong's fantastical epics of sitar-inflected kosmische music (e.g. *Mana-Yood-Sushai*, 2013). Musicians have often drawn on religious texts, practices and sounds, and many listeners respond to the music in the language of spiritual experience.

Drone Metal Texts and Discourses: Om

This paper focuses on prominent drone metal band Om, who have released five drone metal albums, of which *Advaitic Songs* is their most recent. While I've studied the sounds and textual references of their previous output, along with other related musicians, the present focus is on their most recent recording. As part of a wider doctoral research project and as background to the present article, I have conducted participant observation at four Om concerts, and collected a large amount of information from Om listeners in surveys and interviews about their engagement with recordings and performances. Here, though, I am concerned primarily with online reviews, commentary and other discourse surrounding *Advaitic Songs*, having read several hundred online reviews and several thousand comments on social media sites such as YouTube.

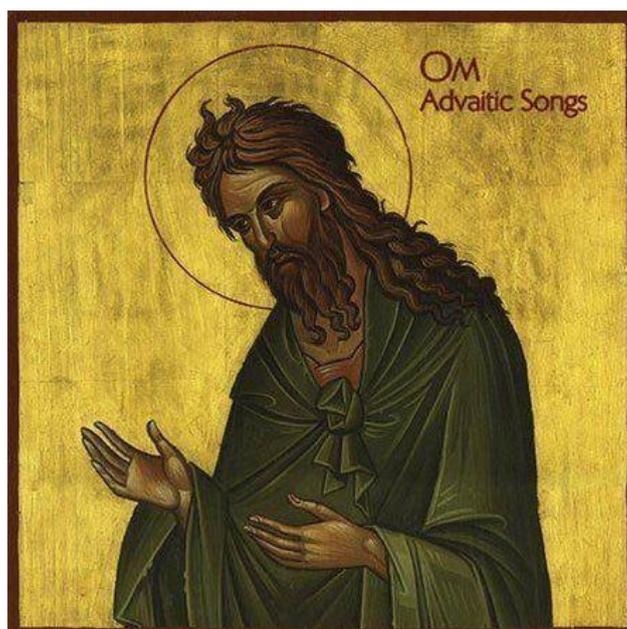


Figure 1. Reproduction of album cover of Om's Advaitic Songs (2012).

Already the name of the band gestures towards themes in mystical scholarship: a word in which sound and spiritual meaning are not separated while the band's own sound is onomateopoeically indexed. The cover art is striking, referencing a Byzantine icon of John the Baptist, while the title *Advaitic Songs* refers to Vedic tradition. Often album covers, titles and names are observed before any sound is heard: in these elements there are already citations and redeployments of religiosity from different places and times, thereby potentially preparing listeners for religious content or response. Since Om's debut album *Variations on a Theme* in 2005, Om have gradually introduced more instrumentation to the core of bass, drums and vocals; *Advaitic Songs* features vocal samples, Indian instruments tabla and tanpura, piano and frequent use of cello. Frequently, sounds are heard as indeterminately exotic ("Indian/Middle-Eastern (somebody correct me) instrumentation" Vin, 2013), and attributed in Orientalist fashion to vast areas of the globe ("weaving African drone with Eastern tablas" Newall, 2012). Extending this, some reviewers hear a sonic counterpart to the East-West spiritual synthesis found in the lyrics and echoing much discourse surrounding mysticism:

a quite delicate collaboration of Western and Eastern drone music
(ThrashManiacAD, 2012)

elaborate tapestry of culturally-saturated ominous meditational
music. (ImpureSoul, 2012)

flawlessly blends the atmosphere of Hindu-esque world music, the
melodies of rock and folk, the grandeur and power of doom and
drone. (ImpureSoul, 2012)

Western instruments mix with tabla, santours and flutes like a musical Israel of coexistent religions, sounds, keys and scales. (Saeidi, 2012)

The recombination of names, places and texts as well as sounds can be heard throughout the record, as can be seen on the lyric sheet: first track Addis might connote Addis Ababa, centre of Coptic Christianity, as well as the Hebrew for 'Son of Adam,' while the lyrics, recited and included in the lyric sheet in Sanskrit, are a rendition of the Hindu Mahamrityunjaya/Om Triambukam mantra, also recorded by Ravi Shankar amongst others (Shankar, 1997). The opening syllable of the mantra, and also of the recording, is also the name claimed by the group: 'Om'. Elsewhere, concepts and texts from a variety of sources are collected in the song entitled 'Gethsemane' after the garden in which Christ prayed before execution: Prana; Arahat; Devekut; Ezekiel's wheel; and Nicodemus. These reference, respectively: energy/life-force in yoga; individuals who have attained enlightenment in Buddhism; closeness to God in Jewish kabbalah; Old Testament prophetic vision; and the witness to the removal of Christ from the cross.

These references appear in conjunction with other idiosyncratically mystical constructions such as "the world labyrinth" and "temple-cave of the heart shrine-vigil on the mountain" (Om, 2012). Other than Cisneros' cryptic lyrics winding these references together, there is no unifying commentary, nor direction to the original sources beyond the proper names or non-English words. These prompt some interested readers/listeners to carry out their own research online: "The first song on the album is named 'Addis', a quick Google search reveals that this means 'earth' and a Hebrew variant of the name 'Adam' (Saeidi, 2012), though the lack of contextualisation or explicit signposting to other texts or even authors sets Om's citations apart from the practices (or at least the ideals) of scholarly citation. This can result in confusion or divergent readings: the cover is often thought to be an icon of Jesus rather than John the Baptist (ImpureSoul, 2012); the Sanskrit mantra which features in the introduction to 'Addis' is heard as Hindi (Burnett, 2012), Arabic (McKibbin, 2012) or "an unidentifiable language" (Viney, 2012), and the Arabic prayer in the song 'Sinai' is interpreted as Tibetan (Brown, 2012) or "Hindu" (Vin, 2013). Even when lyrics are in English, reviewers writing in the same language report inability to understand them, though often this doesn't interfere with an appreciative listening:

the lack of navigable lyrics force the listener onto a journey of sonic exploration that both enriches and rewards in equal measure (Newall, 2012)

We don't know where it's from (sounds like Arabic) or what it says, but the effect is clear. We can recognize the attempt to transcend daily concerns, to reach some higher mental plane no matter the language through emphatic repeating of verse and sound, no matter the vehicle it's delivered in. (Wuethrick, 2012)

Cisneros' bass lurches between mewling and menacing below his mantra-like vocals, much of which are absurd and impenetrable.... But Om's message has never been conveyed through mere semantics, more through the all encompassing spirituality of their sound. (McGeady, 2012)

Elsewhere, commenters claim the record for a particular tradition. YouTube commentators claim that it is Buddhist and not Hindu, others Hindu and not Buddhist, which starts an argument about which tradition is older, while elsewhere atheists, Christians and Muslims dismiss others' claims of understanding the religious background of the song while accusing one another of intolerance (*Om – Sinai – Advaitic Songs*, 2012).

Concerns are voiced about the propriety of both citation and juxtaposition; Listeners with no particular religious affiliation sometimes display unease, and there are often attempts to reassure themselves or others that listening to the album is not a gesture of support for, or subordination to, any particular religious discourse (especially Christianity):

you won't have to worry about over-indulgent sessions of masturbatory Christ-praising here. (Sarah, 2012)

Everything [...] is explicitly designed to awaken a sense of something higher in even the most spiritually impoverished listener. Which is not to say, of course, that this is a Christian Rock record, or anything of the sort.' (Macmillan, 2012)

I'm glad I wasn't deterred by the album art of Christ. (ImpureSoul, 2012)

Others provide their own commentary. Posted on a website (RateYourMusic.com) which collects listener reviews, one review consists of an exegetical paragraph which provides definitions for the album title, points to the perceived importance of the cover art in understanding the overall themes of the album, provides some new citations from both the Bible and the Qur'an with commentary, explains how the sound and instrumentation fit with the interpretation, and finishes with an exhortation to participate in the consumption of psychoactive drugs, explicitly figured as mystical and implying pilgrimage and attendant drone metal listening:

Advaitic Songs is simply masterful and elegant. The album title comes from a Hindu system of thought in which the 'Advaita' (literally 'non-dual') refers to the self (Atman) and the whole (Brahman). Everything is a part of and made of one nondual consciousness. The cover Represents an orthodox icon of John the Baptist. This figure is of great importance to understand the main themes of the album. According to biblical sources, he announced the arrival of the Messiah. 'And John Called To Him two of His disciples, and Sent Them to Jesus, Saying: Art thou he That art to come, or look we for another?' Luke 7:19

John the Baptist is also present in the Qur'an as one of the great prophets who preceded Muhammad.

'[He was Told] 'O Zechariah, indeed We give you good tidings of a boy Whose name will be John. We have not assigned to any before [this] name.'

Surat Maryam 19:7

'[Allah] said, 'O John, take the Scripture with determination.' And We Gave HIM Judgement [while yet] a boy.'

Surat Maryam 19:12

Thus he is the constant presence of the precursor in the spiritual life of humanity.

So here we are transported to another place, another time; an archaic time among the sandy dunes and the incense fumes, in which all humanity began. Amid Middle Eastern sounds, mantra and prayers, the album stands out for two main reasons: originality and evocativity. The innovative aspect of the album is given mainly by the different sounds that compose it. where once was a privileged one great cyclical riff, now there is an enrichment of instrumental and compositional details in which the basic riff is allowed to flow between the various instruments. While the evocative side stems from Middle Eastern-flavored percussions, strings played sometimes softly and others more intense decorated with piano chords, the whole fused into an ancestral and timeless spirituality.

Let's smoke some psychoactive weed and begin our mystical trip!
(Heka, 2012)

Echoing advice in mystical scholarship about how best to read, various descriptions or prescriptions can be found about the ideal mind/body states that might provide optimum results. Sometimes advice is to "sit back, relax" (Saeidi, 2012), or to use headphones (Vecchio, 2012). Conversely, but also in line with the prescriptions of mystical commentaries, some reviewers or commenters suggest other readings in conjunction with listening, whether from "Eastern philosophies and the Bible" (Mad submarine, 2013), Frank Herbert's science fiction epic *Dune* (Konta, 2013), or desert pilgrimage video game *Journey* (ThyCrossAwaits, 2012).

Some interpretations can fall into the same traps of Orientalist and colonialist movements that mark the study of mysticism, with the worst stereotypes of the 'mystic East' recycled:

Opener 'Addis' cites Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital and the primitive, sparse instrumentation give you a better impression of the city than any po-faced, two-dimensional guide book ever could. As bongo drums and a drawn out, mournful cello weave among a sultry female vocal in an unidentifiable language, one can almost feel the searing African heat, the slow grind of daily life and the splendid isolation our imaginary wanderer must feel. (Viney, 2012)

From the obligatory sultriness of women, to the exoticism of unidentified language (actually Sanskrit), to the “primitive” nature of the (actually Indian) instrumentation apparently indexing an Ethiopian city for the reviewer, who disparages touristic impressions of place despite reproducing exactly the kind of tropes one might expect in a dated guidebook. The supposed “splendid isolation” is surprising considering the evocation of a large city; depressingly less so when reminded that the traveller is somehow “our[s],” presumably through being white and male amidst the “slow grind” and “searing” heat, in an “Africa” of the colonial imagination. Some awful clichés to be sure, but perhaps partly to be expected given the combination of signifiers of an exoticised spiritual otherness. In another telling example, I saw the headline: “Om to play [their 2006 song] ‘At Giza’ at foot of Egyptian ruins” on a metal news blog (Pessaro, 2013). I assumed the gig was going to be in Egypt; instead, it took place at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a building which itself collects together fragments and ruins of different civilizations, authorizing imperialist classifications and categorisations through its ownership, explanation and spatial distribution of artefacts.

The texts cited in Om’s drone metal are not only those of established religious traditions, but of heavy metal itself. While some commenters note how far the band’s sound has departed from metal (“there is no metal here,” Mad Submarine, 2013), Om do employ the traditionally heavily distorted guitar tones and emphasis on riffs of metal music, particularly on the song ‘State of Non-Return’. This lineage is heard and reinscribed by a reviewer who describes Om as “a stripped down continuation of Sleep’s immense sound and Sabbath worship” (Caldwell, 2012) referencing Al Cisneros’ previous band Sleep and metal originators Black Sabbath. The final word “worship” even employs a metaphor of metal as religious tradition, while playing in the style of Black Sabbath is figured as spiritual practice. This common rhetoric is extended with reference to Om specifically, their music described as a spiritual manifestation of heavy metal’s tradition:

Om is not exactly metal; they’re pan-global mystical music for the heavy-metal demographic. (Powell, 2012)

Interfaith heaviness (Dronelove, 2013)

Om has finally found their niche as the Old Testament prophets of metal. (Wiley, 2013)

i don't meditate but i do listen to om. (Bdbjr, 2012)

this is as close to a religious experience as anyone will get within the extreme music community. (Hemy, 2012)

It won’t convert you to belief in God - that’s not really the point - but it might well make you a firm believer in OM themselves. (Macmillan, 2012)

Reviewers suggest that Om's collage of spiritual sounds and images arises in response to a disenchanting modernity:

Two of the things that you lose when you live in a godless world are the sense of ritual (the bells and smells of the Catholic mass or its equivalent) and a sense of deeper or transcendental meaning. These are exactly the sorts of things that OM's new record, *Advaitic Songs*, will try to give back to you. (Macmillan, 2012).

Another reviewer claims that Om's songs are about ritual, but also are rituals themselves (Henry, 2012), again reminiscent of the dissolution of fixed distinction between discourse on mysticism and mystical discourse.

Citation, Recitation

I referred earlier to an implied separation between two ways of using fragments of antecedent texts: a false opposition between, on one hand, the academic conventions of selecting, editing, quoting and reframing (as 'citing') and on the other, the musical setting, performance and repetition of 'mystical' fragments in drone metal's recordings and concerts (as 'reciting'). But my own citations, selections and representations of texts, fragments and quotations from both the study of mysticism and drone metal, and my attendant commentary are not to bemoan supposedly 'wrong' ways of citing in academic scholarship (practices which, in any case, I can't and wouldn't want to completely avoid here). Nor are they to uncritically celebrate some radically different setting-into-motion of references in the musical tradition of drone metal, since (as I hope I've shown) these uses exist in a similar networks of implications and compromises, constitutive of the productions they support rather than incidental to them. Instead, I've juxtaposed the uses of textual references in two traditions which share thematic interest but diverge in their epistemological and cultural status, their audiences and sites of reception, interpretation and response, simply to suggest that citations are always recitations, and recitations always also citations.

In each citation of the Kabbalah, John of the Cross or Sanskrit mantras, either in mystical scholarship or in Om's music and the discourses that surround it, fragments are used in new contexts for new purposes, and claims to certain kinds of authority are made through referring to these older texts. Even to use particular prayers, mantras, words or concepts in songs and in conjunction with other elements, without accompanying explanation or commentary, is to make implicit claims about their proper uses and the user's ability to employ them as meaningful signs. At the same time, re-presentation of fragments in music, journal articles, academic books or any other context are always recitations, in the sense of staged performances with particular 'scripts.' The reading of the fragments in new selections and with surrounding commentaries, will always remobilise the quotations and juxtapositions in ways not confined to epistemological projects of discovering truth. Instead, they are always embedded in individual practices and itineraries of reading, rereading, recitation and use. Obvious examples to look at, given the texts and fragments I have been repositioning, are online customer reviews of

Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945). Readings of that text are reported in new writings, with yet again, metaphorical language which hints at the mystical and at powerful experience; advice about reading practices; and even a subtle link to music in the reference to Desert Island Discs, a BBC radio programme in which guests choose eight records, one book and one luxury item to take with them to the notional island.

I've never met this book's equal. It left me awestruck not only by the content but by its style. Every sentence is a jewel that could be studied over for years. (A Customer (1), 1997)

This would be my Desert Island Discs book choice. I have read it three times now & have found it inspiring & uplifting each time. My last reading took 6 mths whilst travelling in India, it's so rich it's best consumed in small portions, a page or two a day. Otherwise it can be dipped into, going to whichever section seems relevant or just by randomly opening the book. (A Customer (2), 2006).

Mystical Citation, Recitation, Exegesis and Commentary: Om on YouTube

In conclusion, I introduce a final example to show the interrelation of citation and recitation, and to highlight an intertextual text which writes mystical scholarship into drone metal discourse while this paper does the reverse. Om's *Advaitic Songs* has been posted on video-sharing site YouTube, not by band members or record label representatives but by a website user and music fan; the posting is itself a citation, a digital copy of the sound recording. Also posted on the site are the individual tracks from the recording, or live versions recorded at concerts often by audience members on their own mobile devices. The full album post, by the time of writing had registered more than 500,000 'views' since being posted in October 2012, and had attracted well over five hundred user comments (all of which, including those I subsequently cite or quote, can be found below the embedded video, at the website address listed in the bibliography under *Om Advaitic Songs [Full Album]* (2012), posted by Federico Larosa, or by searching YouTube for that title). These comments form an open-ended text, featuring contributions by hundreds of authors while constrained by the format, structure and policies of the website and collected (literally) under the title and audiovisual clip of Om's album cover and recording. These authors often cite and recite other texts, and all mark their own encounters with Om's recording which itself cites and recites other texts.

Some listeners mark particularly significant moments, commenting with numbers to indicate positions on the clip's time counter: the moment at which heavily distorted bass guitar first enters (Faulsauls); or a point in 'Gethsemane' when all other instruments fall away to leave just a deep, swirling tanpura drone sound (Shunt, Faulsauls); or alternatively highlighting the enunciation of particular words in the lyrics (Squat). Several listeners contribute by citing the same texts or fragments as Om, such as those who type or paste the Sanskrit mantra that opens the album, in Sanskrit

transliterated into English characters (Vectorial), translated into English (Duval), both transliteration and translation (Homunculus) or transliteration and Sanskrit script (Stoian). This might be to provide a context that other listeners may be unaware of (and thereby perform their own knowledge), or, given the nature of the words, as a kind of typed and posted recitation of the mantra itself. Some listeners go further, citing related texts and sounds. This includes mentioning other texts which have made similar citations or made uses of the same sources, such as the user who notes the Ravi Shankar recording of the same mantra (Souschek), or by posting links to closely related clips, such as to a seventy-minute version of the mantra by singer Hein Braat (Ftoulis), or to another recording of the Hajj prayer used in the song 'Sinai' (VoidWalker).

Others ask fellow listeners to identify the instruments used from the sounds (Karlsen), or to recommend similar music (Hu-Ajem). The latter receives a variety of responses, showing different itineraries of listening and different considerations of similarity, from electronic music (Sattfield), to Indian classical music (Brian L), to other drone metal bands with an "extreme eastern influenced doom atmosphere" (Joelmusic) that can be read even in their names: Queen Elephantine, Eight Hands for Kali, Dark Buddha Rising (from the US, Spain and Finland respectively). One request is for similar music but "WITHOUT any hindu mantra, buddism or hindu references? [...] something more... Christian like?" (Leihoa), hinting at personal religious concerns about propriety and influence.

As frequent as discussions of related music are suggestions or requests about books: one commenter asks others to "Mention books or authors you've read along your path?" after having listed philosophers, anthropologists and religious figures "Alain de Botton, Julian Baggini, Frances de Waal, Kakuzo Okakura, J. G. Frazer, Laotse, Li Po, Attar" (Majeed). Many follow suit, whether in direct response or independently, mentioning amongst others Robert Anton Wilson and Carlos Castaneda (Testa); or *Yoga Aphorisms* of Patanjali, and Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (Mmc1178). Elsewhere, quotes not directly derived from Om's uses are presented, such as a quote from Ephesians about enlightenment (Jomairy) which is left without further comment other than the Bible (ESV) reference; or, from an apparently very different religious perspective, "the only church that is illuminating is a burning church" (Zinthala). A later commenter responds to this approvingly by naming Varg Vikernes, a black metal musician notorious for involvement in arson attacks on churches in Norway (BlackMetalBands); to which the first poster clarifies that the (paraphrased, translated) quote is from Spanish anarchist Buenaventura Durruti, the poster going on to also quote ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu.

Other comments question propriety in citation or attribution. One listener demands acknowledgment of the Hindu sources, accusing Om of plagiarism (Krishna), while another exclaims "Christian music in the rhythm of the Arab Muslims perceived ?? this is heretic !" (Pitakpetr), reminiscent of the earlier seeker of a more "Christian" version of Om's music (Leihoa), while the term "heretic" is itself reappropriated as a positive term by a respondent

(chupacabra6606). More general discussions of religious themes and concepts emerge, for example about heaven (Deweert, Dubeta), consciousness (A Person, Scott, Nobody), and the meaning of the word Om (Pithas, Sealed). Hierarchies are claimed and disputed, claiming definitively that “this [music]” is “Hinduism not Buddha” (Prakash), that all religions are true but Norse paganism especially so (Zsarah), or that what is described by one listener as “religious crap” implies that the band members are “delusional morons” (Nobody). A claim about tolerance by someone apparently claiming to speak on behalf of a particular tradition, is particularly ironic:

The atheists up here commenting are fools because Adwaita Hinduism is the most respectful of atheists and atheism of practically any religion (Atmost11).

But in addition to all this intertextual criticism, interpretation, discussion and exegesis, many other comments are reminders that all of this reading and writing, which refers to other readings and writings, is taking place for both commenters and readers while listening to a recitation of Om’s intertextual text. Listeners report intersections of the sound with everyday practices and activities, for example as a complement to meditation (Debow), yoga (Wesley), or *puja* ritual (Darlene), or simply as having curious effects on pets (Gallaxsee). Parallel engagements with other texts are noted, through listening while reading (especially fantasy, science fiction, or horror, such as *Dune* (Konta) or *Conan [the Barbarian]* (Marud), or *Dracula* (Veganxbones); also writing (homework for Täti), or playing video games, arguably a form of textual practice combining both ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ (Xcardboardox, Junkreep).

These reports contain reminders of how the uses of and response to Om’s music are always uses, as part of everyday life; but the very fact that they are reported also feeds back into a compilation of practices, instances, responses and memories rendered as texts. This requires bodily participation and engagement, even through the physical sensations of music played quietly through earphones or computer speakers, and through reading and typing. Even in typing there seems to be a certain sense of recitation, as with the several commenters who type (or paste from one place to another) the text of the mantra, or those who take the time to contribute simply by writing typographical variations on a theme of “Om”: (Rocker1181, Yop, OMDogOM, Faulslauls, Levolovel, Sharma).

A different, perhaps more engaged participation is evident in reports of listening while meditating (Debow) or practising yoga (Wesley), while another way of engaging with the text is to repeatedly sing and play along (on musical instruments) with the recording (Tunezlover). A still more extreme way of integrating Om’s texts into practices of the body is described by Rizzo, who reports having “a piece tattooed on my whole ribcage from an Om tour poster.” Here a symbol of a live music event has been physically inscribed onto the body, and then reported and displayed textually in the online collection of responses. People relate extraordinary incidents such as being rendered speechless (JFEEZY419), though even reports of experiences

which make claims about ineffability and experience beyond language are, like all others, still inextricable from the textual form in which they are communicated and the structure of the context in which they appear. Even the following visionary dream is closely bound to both actual and imagined readings, as well as to the language it is reported in and the discourse which has prompted it:

I've read Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda. I had a dream the other week where I was in a classroom and the teacher handed me a book of Yogananda's, and it was very thick and full of mysteries. There was a picture of Yogananda in the book, he was standing in a field of alien looking trees, and he had dreadlocks that were sticking up everywhere like he had control over gravity. (Mmcc1178).

All of these comments contribute to ongoing and open-ended mystical exegeses of Om's uses of texts, and of listeners' uses of and encounters with Om's sound. These responses, and many others on other videos, and other responses to Om, and about other music and other cultural forms, online and in other media, are always reciting while they cite. They testify to reflexively interwoven practices of texts that become part of everyday lives, where a mystical unknowing gives way to a corporeal engagement with the materiality of (sonic) texts, reinscribed into verbal discourses, characters of which are even turned away from semantics and towards performing an index of the body:

I have no idea what the hell they're talking about but it sounds incredible :D (Souschek).

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