

**The Disobedient Subject:
Masculinity and Spirituality in
Christopher Isherwood's Life Writing¹**

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I. Introduction

Life writing offers queer men a set of writing and reading practices that can be employed to radically resignify hostile meanings ascribed to their differently ordered sense of being. Within the newly identified (sub)genre “queer spiritual autobiography” (see Stewart) such praxis defends itself against what Gayatri Spivak terms the “epistemic violence” of imperialism (in this case, in its religious incarnation) that repeatedly attacks queer folkways of knowing and representation (251). Critical response to Christopher Isherwood’s religious writings suffers from the Christianized worldview’s reflexive tendency to deem its superior epistemological status as self evident and universal. This tendency has worked not only to naturalize one particular *weltanschauung* but also to paralyze the intelligent exploration of the religious life by queer men and women. In this context, life writing texts become sites for staging what Judith Butler calls “unforeseen and unsanctioned modes of identity,” which effectively “chang[e] the subject” and disrupt authorized versions of masculinity and the construction of the ‘homosexual’ as religious pariah (Salih and Butler 10).²

Foucault calls dominant cultural expectations of what it might be possible for a homosexual to know “regimes of truth”—power/knowledge relations that constitute “a set of rules by which truth is produced” (297).³ In his personal search and his textual interrogation of notions around what constitutes a ‘self,’ Isherwood produced versions of subjective identification that confronted the exclusivist and heteronormative modelling of the religious life as it was framed discursively within his own historical context. Consequently, by crossing borders and taking up a tradition of beliefs and spiritual practices rooted in the culture of a

people colonized by British interests, Isherwood became a controversial figure, and much of his subsequent work was ignored or slighted. But I maintain that his choice to live experimentally and the texts that rehearse the processes he put himself through resonate strongly for a new readership in the early twenty-first century.

Homosexuality and religious life are constructed antagonistically by conservative (read Western and Middle-Eastern) religious discourses. But stepping outside the subject boundaries that are produced by the so-called truth regimes of Western religious epistemologies in order to access knowledge resources conventionally unavailable within their own ethnocentric cultural contexts allows interesting hybrid possibilities for queer identity formation and the liberation of intelligent inquiry. This is a significant strategic shift, as resistance to the violence of homophobically-inspired exclusion has relied largely on political reconfigurations, in effect abandoning spiritual inquiry as a pertinent knowledge resource. Re-reading texts produced within the newly identified sub-genre of Stewart's "queer spiritual autobiography"⁴ it becomes clear that such narratives provide testimony of "moments in which the subject exceeds the terms that constitute him/her" (Salih and Butler 10). The subject of these narratives throws off the prescribed and oppressive identities, which have been produced by discourses of subjugation, and assertively participates in the resignification of meaning.

As early as 1996, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson raised this possibility in their theorizing of life writing and auto/biographic practice, wherein they re-frame life writing as a critical intervention into post-modern life and a resistant strategy for re-narrativizing the self. "Seizing the occasion and telling the story," say Smith and Watson, "turns speakers into subjects of narrative who can exercise some control over the meaning of their lives." They go on to claim that this assertion is "particularly compelling for those whose personal histories include stories that have been culturally unspeakable" (13–14). I locate queer life-writing practice within this frame and read it as a way of *speaking* the unspeakable. In my analysis, queer life-writing interrogates the often-hostile discourses of religion, the law, and psychological medicine to pursue a more authentic reconciliation with sexuality and spirituality (as I define that troubled

term). Pushing beyond the now familiar tropes of the “coming out” story (see Jolly), then, there are illuminating examples of life-writing by gay men in which spirituality emerges as a central preoccupation alongside sexuality and opens up different possibilities for constructing identity. In effect there are some striking examples that stage a “coming out spiritually” (see de la Huerta). These writers use memoir as part of the process of reclaiming the lost parts of self discursively banished by religion.

Rather than fighting for a stable, coherent continuous identity, men whose sense of self has been so thoroughly (and ontologically) dislocated by the concerted efforts of various homophobic discourses have often found themselves more at home with certain de-centered notions of selfhood that they encounter in Eastern metaphysics.⁵

II. The Case of Christopher Isherwood

Memoirist, diarist, travel writer, playwright, and auto/biographer, Christopher Isherwood was a British expatriate writer who settled in Southern California on the eve of World War II. He first came to fame as an incidental chronicler of the rise of the Nazis in the Berlin of 1930s (see *The Berlin Stories*). Virtually ignored after his defection to California, Isherwood re-emerged in the literary world as a kind of avuncular mentor in the rise of the gay liberation movement of the 1970s (see *Christopher and His Kind*). However, his religious writings—produced after his encounter with a Swami in the Ramakrishna Vedanta Order in 1939 and culminating in the highly original auto/biographical text *My Guru and His Disciple* (1980)—often have been overlooked.⁶ The reasons for this occlusion are complex and instructive and I discuss them elsewhere.⁷ There is now a surge of renewed interest (a veritable third wave, if you like) in Isherwood as an early exemplar of this turn to the “East,” and scholars are looking to his life-writing (the memoirs, the diaries, the auto/biographies) to re-examine some of his textual strategies for rehearsing different subjective positionings and extending the possibilities of the queer imaginary.

Isherwood took himself through a series of dislocations—geographical, psychological, and ontological—before discovering the means to effectively re-locate his subjectivity within a metaphysical re-alignment

that brought him to terms with what he called the “home self.” I shall backtrack briefly to suggest the source of the dislocation he was experiencing—the personal psychological insecurities that were destabilizing him⁸ at the very time he was being heralded by some as the best novelist of his generation.⁹

The first of these insults to the psyche was the shock and depersonalization he experienced in early initiation into boarding school life. Looking back, Isherwood recalled how he was uprooted from life with a doting nanny in the nursery:

[T]he images which remained in the memory are not in themselves terrible or rigorous: they are of boot-lockers, wooden desks, lists on boards, name-tags in clothes—yes, the name pre-eminently; the name which in a sense makes you nameless, less individual rather than more so: Bradshaw-Isherwood, C.W. in its place on some alphabetical list; the cold daily, hourly reminder that you are not the unique, the loved, the household’s darling, but just one among many. I suppose that this loss of identity is really much of the painfulness which lies at the bottom of what is called Homesickness; *it is not Home that one cries for but one’s home-self.* (qtd. in Parker *Isherwood; A Life Revealed* 40–41 emphasis added)¹⁰

Indeed the dislocation from the security of the family was intensified by the death of his father in World War I when Isherwood was only ten years old. The “loss of identity” expressed in this passage reveals more than just nostalgia for the nursery; it is the call of an almost primal search for what he terms the “home-self,” a search that was to drive Isherwood’s restless quest for security. The above reminiscence dates from the 1960s, by which time, with the help of his guru, Isherwood had made a kind of peace with the existential dilemma of being in the world.

Isherwood escaped what were for him the oppressive confines of Edwardian England in his early twenties. During this time Isherwood moved to Germany with his best friend W.H. Auden, where he was able to try out a new language and give free rein to his sexuality.¹¹ This time of freedom was followed a five-year period of painful peregrination around

Europe, as he tried to keep his German lover, Heinz Neddermeyer, out of the hands of the Nazis. An attempt to get the young man into England was rebuffed by a suspicious British immigration official.¹² After Heinz was arrested and imprisoned, Isherwood and Auden traveled to China as war correspondents. On the return voyage their ship stopped in New York, and soon they returned to take up residence in the United States on the eve of the Second World War.

While Auden settled on the East Coast in an attempt to seek intellectual support for his new-found pacifism, Isherwood went to California to meet up with Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard. The unexpected encounter with the man who was to become his guide for the next forty years—Swami Prabhavananda, of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Order—is detailed in the *Diaries* (1996), in his assorted writings for the Vedanta Society, and, most notably, in the late autobiography *My Guru and His Disciple* (1980). Just as Isherwood had embraced German as a way of rehearsing new possibility for selfhood, he now found the “very Indianness” of Vedanta helpful. He was “grateful to Vedanta for speaking Sanskrit,” as he put it (49). He could learn a religion afresh, free from the inevitable associations he carried from his Anglican upbringing:

I needed a brand-new vocabulary and here it was, with a set of philosophical terms which were exact in meaning, unemotive, untainted by disgusting old associations with clergymen's sermons, schoolmasters' pep talks, politicians' patriotic speeches.
(*My Guru* 49)

In spite of his prejudice towards religion (he had rejected his mother's snobbish Anglicanism, been interested in socialism, and declared himself an atheist) he began a serious study of a new set of philosophical principles and took up an empirical meditation practice—the combined effect of which, over time, subtly but inexorably effected a shift in his understanding of the roots of the self.

The extraordinary permutations of the first person point of view in Isherwood's life-writing texts have often been remarked upon (see Kamel). But what might have initially sprung from a youthful discomfort with the performing, “narcissistic” self (Parker *A Life Revealed*

393)¹³ shifted. Over decades of Vedanta study and praxis Isherwood's understanding of self developed into a radical revisioning of the relation between the personal self and what Western theologians such as Paul Tillich term a "ground of being," that is, an understanding prefigured in ancient Vedanta concepts dealing with the relationship between individual *atman* and the supreme principle: *Param Brahman*. I believe that it is this fundamental re-orientation of the notion of the self that underpins Isherwood's brilliant textual manipulations of the first person point of view to which Kamel and others have drawn attention.¹⁴

Far from this being an easy route, in seeking out a religion that would accept him as a homosexual, Isherwood used both the discomfiting perspective which meditation practice brings into the obsessive workings of the mind, and the acute awareness of the posturing of the "performing self," to *fuel* his self-scrutiny and probe the very nature of being itself. Stephen Wade has called for Isherwood to be re-evaluated as a serious religious writer, yet many were incredulous that an unrepentant "homosexualist" who wrote for the Hollywood movie studios and consorted with celebrities could sustain any serious engagement with the religious life. Perhaps an age that has become skeptical of hagiography might now be able to recognize more truthfulness in the personally unflattering, non-confessional honesty of this so-called narcissist, the Christopher Isherwood of the *Diaries* and the other life narratives, with all his flaws on display. One of the few British commentators able to see beyond Isherwood's self-deprecation is psychologist Adam Phillips. His review of *Lost Years* for *The Guardian* identifies Isherwood's "determination to track down even the most elusive and unappealing aspects of his past in order to understand and honestly portray himself, both as a writer and as a human being" (n.pag). In contrast with the usual charges of narcissism, Phillips has Isherwood using recollection not just for the construction of some personal myth but as "the best cure for egotism" (n.pag).

Phillips observes, astutely, that "we may look better if we rearrange the facts, but rearranging the facts is also moral propaganda," and he acknowledges that as a writer Isherwood was aware of the need for an ongoing "critique of the self-justifying voice" (n.pag). This is a useful practice in spiritual work as well. Auden said of Isherwood's use of auto-

biographical material that he was “that rarest of all creatures, the objective narcissist; he sees himself altogether plain and does not hesitate to record for us the lines that the face in the mirror has accumulated, the odd shadow that flaws the character” (qtd. in Sutherland C9).

III. The Self Beyond the Self

A writer who is often compared with Isherwood is Andrew Harvey. Among his many books, Harvey has published translations of poems by the Persian mystical poet Rumi (Mevlani), one of which reads:

Once you have tied yourself to selflessness,
you will be delivered from selfhood
and released from the snares of a hundred ties ...
(*Way of Passion* 51)

The refrain that tags each verse of the poem runs: “so come, return to the root of the root of your own self” (51). Implicit in the mystic's call is the teaching that the missing “root” of connectedness will not be found *outside* the self, nor will it be found *as* the personal self. Instead the Divine must be known as an embodied experience, by direct contact, not through doctrines, rituals and belief, but deep within and beyond the obsessions of the egoic identity. Rumi is pointing even deeper than the self, then, suggesting its deeper connections into the very root of being.

Heretofore Isherwood had been unable to find a nest for his restless subjectivity within his own cultural setting. After a series of displacements and an increasing dissatisfaction with the performative ego, he needed a radical revisioning of his identity. As he wrote later, “the desire, the *homesickness*, for sanity is the one valid reason for subjecting oneself to any kind of religious discipline” (*My Guru* 120). If he had stayed at home in Britain, or made his peace with Anglicanism (as Auden did), Isherwood might have found a place within the upper-class social model of religious membership. But another set of religious practices was necessary for one whose sexuality dislocated him—not only psychologically, but also ontologically—from such comfortable environs.

To situate non-conformist practitioners as Isherwood I want to sidestep the usual constructions produced by religion when it is read as a

sociological phenomenon, entailing inclusion in/exclusion from socially and politically valorized faith communities. I enlist instead the interrogatory of the Zen Buddhist *koan*, which states “show me your face before your parents were born,” to deploy a usage of spirituality as an inquiry into the nature of being, with an emphasis on empirical praxis rather than belief. This of course may occur within standardized religious settings, but for queer men often takes place outside these constructs. The production of the personal self from political, social, and linguistic constructs is radically re-configured in this kind of engagement, and the figure of the isolated, personal self is re-absorbed within a field of unified consciousness awareness (*satchitananda* in Sanskrit.)

IV. “Heathen mumbo jumbo”

Reluctance to accord this option any validity sometimes stems from a kind of ethnocentric condescension towards practices derived from the religions of subjugated peoples. Scholars writing from within the value set and assumptions of dominant Western religion paradigms may well marshal a host of objections that fail to take into account the possibility of their own bias. And while Isherwood himself was not insensitive to colonialist prejudice, even his close friend Auden regarded Isherwood’s religion as “heathen mumbo jumbo” (*My Guru* 204).

A Passage to India, written by Isherwood’s mentor E.M. Forster, had been controversial because it presented the British in India as crassly ethnocentric. As well, it had only been a short time (four or five decades) since Swami Vivekananda had established a beachhead for the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in the United States. Isherwood noted with some amusement how the American reception to Vivekananda was marked by “hucksterism” and suspicions of “heathenism,” noting that the word “Swami” was usually associated in the American mind with magicians and prestidigitators from traveling carnivals.¹⁵ In his introduction to a collection of Vivekananda’s writings, Isherwood stated:

Even today, the name “Swami” is associated with theatrical trickery, and most Americans are unaware that those who have the right to call themselves by it have taken formal monastic

vows; that it is, in fact, a title just as worthy of respect as that of "Father" in the Catholic Church. (Yale xi)

Isherwood underscores the pernicious issue of ethnocentric condescension by owning up to such attitudes himself. In his personal account, *An Approach to Vedanta* (1963), he looks back over more than twenty years to examine some of the prejudices and suspicions he faced when the subject came up among people in his own circle in Britain. Notwithstanding the fact that he had been an atheist, he writes:

I think these objections were rooted in twofold prejudice. Whether I liked it or not, I had been brought up in the Christian tradition; anything outside that tradition repelled me as being unnecessarily alien. Also, as a member, whether I liked it or not, of the British upper class, I had somewhere deep inside me a built-in contempt for the culture of "native," "subject" races. If my subconscious had been allowed to speak that clearly, it would have said: "I quite admit that you have the truth, but does it have to come to me wearing a turban? Can't I be an Anglo-Saxon Vedantist?" (*Approach to Vedanta* 34–35)

We cannot ignore the fact that Britain was a colonial power. In India, one of Britain's prize possessions, Hinduism was the religion of the colonized and subjugated people. But while it is one thing for Isherwood to somewhat disingenuously own up to such attitudes, it is quite another to recognize this ethnocentrism as a major, unexamined source of the occlusion evident in much of the coverage and analysis of Isherwood himself. Indeed I suggest that this unexamined ethnocentrism contributes (albeit silently) to the misunderstandings that are instrumental to the occlusion of his religious writings today.¹⁶

In this and other ways Isherwood stepped out of the frame of his culturally assigned subject positioning. I propose that it is this un-authorized access to religious experience that positioned Isherwood's spiritual researches off the radar for literary commentators. Further, I suggest that Isherwood's ex-centric spirituality is as important a source of the neglect of his later life writing as the long-standing resentment by the British

establishment of his pacifism and emigration to California on the eve of war. To take up with the religion of a colonized and subjugated people certainly did nothing to recommend him back into their good graces.

In Peter Berger's analysis, different sources of knowledge and information are accorded "differential plausibility," with "deviant" views marginalized or excluded by dominant discourses. "The threat to the social definitions of reality" is neutralized, write Berger and Thomas Luckman, by "assigning an inferior ontological status, and thereby a not-to-be-taken seriously cognitive status, to all definitions existing outside the symbolic universe" (133). This analysis applies, I believe, to both issues raised in this paper: the assertive recuperation by queer men of sources of knowledge accessed through spiritual practice; and the colonialist repugnance and condescension towards unauthorized technologies of the self derived from alien traditions of spiritual praxis.

A certain hybridity is often the result of such shifting allegiances. I know that hybridity theory causes concern for some scholars, but let me just cite Trinh T. Minh-ha here. Trinh recognizes that identity is a significant factor in politicizing the personal, but she sees identity more as a "point of departure" than "an end point in the struggle" (140). Further, she claims,

[d]ominated and marginalized people have been socialized to see always more than their own point of view. In the complex reality of postcoloniality it is therefore vital to assume one's radical "impurity" and to recognize the necessity of speaking from a hybrid place, hence of saying at least two, three things at a time. (140)¹⁷

In my view, it is not stretching too long a bow to claim that queer points of view share this multi-focalism and, in some cases, alienation from heteronormative conformist respectability has actually assisted in the taking up of technologies of the self from other cultures.

V. East meets West

By resorting to ideas and—more importantly—techniques from supposedly alien cultural and religious traditions, queer writers may be held

accountable on charges of cultural appropriation, even Orientalism, but within their own history many religions can be shown to have mutated and taken on hybridized variations in their own historical encounters with the traditions of other cultures.¹⁸

Peter Savastano provides another way of addressing the issue. He identifies queer men as “virtuosi in the (holy) art of bricolage” (9). Savastano suggests that because they are excluded from “most of the world’s religious traditions,” and thereby find themselves in “a kind of spiritual ‘Diaspora,’” queer men “are forced to forge a diverse array of spiritual practices, re-interpret or invent alternative sacred myths, produce their own mystical writings, and form diverse intentional spiritual communities” (9). It is through this process that they may become “masters of bricolage” (9). The subjective repositioning that takes place through such practices occurs *not* in cultural space (Isherwood was an expatriate Briton, living and working in California), but within the zone of subjective conscious awareness, as it recovers its roots in a *trans*-cultural zone of being/not-being. “Self” is thus a work in progress, and the body becomes the yogic laboratory for the transformation of consciousness.

Despite recent charges that such an interest in self development tend to ignore the availability of similar resources available within Western religious traditions, it is clear that, in the twentieth century, there was a distinct turn towards spiritual practices derived from other religions.¹⁹ Jeffery Paine’s *Re-enchantment: Tibetan Buddhism Comes to the West* (2004) and his earlier book, *Father India: How Encounters With an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West* (1989), provide more sympathetic and insightful accounts of the phenomenon than offered by such skeptics such as Kohn.²⁰ Isherwood was an early example of the turn towards the East that became more common among spiritual seekers in the 1960s and 1970s and he was pleased, in retrospect, to have been part of the opening up of the West to the East. Other British expatriates such as Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts moved in the same circles as Isherwood in Southern California in the 1940s and 1950s, and they made significant contributions in building bridges towards Asian forms of spiritual practice and belief.

Isherwood's texts—both the autobiographical writings and the various apologies he wrote for the Vedanta Society—are part of a rich literature dealing with the encounter of Western trained minds with these Eastern practices.

VI. Conclusion

To re-integrate queer desire into one's personal life narrative it is often necessary to reject the negative constructions provided by homophobic discourses, whatever their source, in order to be able to substitute a re-storied subjectivity that reflects a sense of authenticity personally meaningful to the narrator. Such telling becomes a resistant strategy in which the sexuality is celebrated rather than elided to be made acceptable within the dominant, "discourses of legitimation" (Lyotard 8)—and the listener, or the reader of the text may become complicit in the narrativization:

If gays tell each other—or the hostile world around them—the stories of their lives, they're not just reporting the past but also shaping the future, forging an identity as much as revealing it ... (White x)

It is this re-configuration of identity through narrative that is most relevant to my discussion—the various textual strategies employed in formal life writing by gay men for locating a self that is true to their sense of personal authenticity, even while it may be in friction with ruling heteronormative discourses. Rather than docilely adopting a subjectivity that is a passive product of discourses emanating from outside the self, one participates in the deconstruction of hostile versions of the self and engages with its transformative *re*-construction by an assertive re-storying or re-narrativization of self. In this way, auto/biography has become the literary genre par excellence for rehearsing differently ordered constructions of identity.

Through a series of dislocations—geographical, psychological and ontological—Isherwood gave himself permission to rehearse other possibilities for selfhood than those provided within the context of his Anglican upbringing. Writing from a free-floating subject position—

expatriate, homosexual, pacifist—he was able not only to reposition his subjectivity, but give free rein to an inquiring intelligence to seek out tools for transformation wherever he found them. His investigation and embrace of Vedanta philosophy and practice confronts the standard views of what is possible for a homosexual man to know. In his personal search, and his textual interrogation of notions of what constitutes a self, Isherwood produced versions of subjective identification that continue to confront the exclusivist modeling of the religious life.

Notes

- 1 Gillian Whitlock (1996) has used this term in relation to auto/biographical texts.
- 2 “Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie,” she reminds us (see De Kock 45).
- 3 See Carr for a fuller discussion. Carr draws on the work of Foucault, Sedgwick, and others to unpack the formation of homosexual/heterosexual definitions and their centrality “to twentieth-century Western ... practices of subjectification” (5ff).
- 4 Stewart traces the antecedents of the sub-genre back to Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter in the nineteenth century.
- 5 Peter Conradi picks up on this different concept in his memoir *Going Buddhist: Panic and Emptiness, the Buddha and Me* (2004). According to Conradi, through meditation, the practitioner discovers the “flimsy” nature of the self “as experience, not theory,” coming to the realisation “that life is a stream of becoming, a series of manifestations and extinctions’, leading to an awareness that the concept of the individual ego is ‘a popular delusion’ (49). Hamilton-Merritt came up against the same idea—that “the self is not personal, nor permanent, nor static, and consequently that the individual does not exist as a permanent and identifiable entity”—in her encounter with Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice in Thailand, in the 1970s (23). Batchelor confronts this notion too, in *Buddhism Without Beliefs* (1997).
- 6 A lone early example came from S. Nagarajan (1972), but the recent collection edited by Berg and Freeman *The Isherwood Century* (2000), and the journal article by Wade (2001), may mark a turning of the tide.
- 7 See Marsh, “The Journey of the Queer ‘I’: Spirituality and Subjectivity in Life Narratives by Gay Men.”
- 8 Drawing on Isherwood’s own writings, Parker, the most recent of Isherwood biographers, depicts this existential crisis well (*A Life Revealed* 393ff).

- 9 He was described as such by Somerset Maugham, to Virginia Woolf. Isherwood quotes from Woolf's diary record of the occasion, in *Christopher and His Kind* (326).
- 10 This reminiscence is from the first draft of the biographical study of his parents, *Kathleen and Frank* (Huntington CI 1082: 81). The version published in *Kathleen and Frank* (1971) differs slightly (285).
- 11 At one stage he rented rooms in Berlin from Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, whose Institute for Sexual Science (Institut für Sexualwissenschaft) was an early target of the Nazis.
- 12 This rebuff occurred on a second visit to the U.K. The complicated journeys during this period are chronicled in the Parker biography (235, 238).
- 13 In 1939 he wrote to his friend and editor John Lehmann that he was tired of "strumming on that old harp, the ego, darling Me" (qtd. in Parker 436).
- 14 See Faraone who has written about Isherwood's spirituality.
- 15 Vivekananda attended the landmark Parliament of Religions in Chicago, in 1893. The Archbishop of Canterbury refused to attend, objecting that the very meeting of such a parliament implied the equality of all religions.
- 16 I am not alone in recognising the neo-colonial prejudice towards spiritual traditions from "subject" races. Robb picks up on the point in relation to the suspicion surrounding the reception of Aldous Huxley's turn towards spirituality and, specifically, his adoption of Gandhi's principles of nonviolence:
Although Englishmen were well aware of Gandhi and his movement, the acceptance of his principles was effectively impeded by an ingrained British contempt for subject native races. (Robb 53)
Robb cites this same reference in Isherwood, but doesn't pick up on the irony of Isherwood's putting himself in the dock (60).
- 17 For the wider debate about the validity or otherwise of hybridity as a useful tool see Pieterse's 2000 article "Hybridity, So What? The Anti-hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition," which proposes that the countervailing argument could be faulted for fetishizing boundaries. Mason's short article (2004) is useful also. There is the possibility of a kind of neo-colonial exploitation at work in plundering other cultures' knowledge resources but I make a case elsewhere (Marsh 2007a) that the traffic moves in both directions.
- 18 I have touched on this briefly in an earlier paper. See Marsh 2007a.
- 19 In 2002, the ABC TV (Australia) program *Compass* broadcast a report on meditation, which they described as "a practice long associated with Eastern religions," but nonetheless enjoying a revival in Christian churches over the past 20 years, under the banner "The World Movement for Christian Meditation," and guided by a Benedictine Monk, Laurence Freeman, who continues the revival of "Christian" meditation begun by another Benedictine, John Main. Main learned the meditation from an Indian Swami in Malaysia in the early 1950s, and only later claimed it as a similar practice to that conducted by the early Christian

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monks known as the "desert fathers" (<http://www.abc.net.au/compass/706523.htm> n.pag).

- 20 There is already a large body of work analyzing the trend within the disciplines of sociology, including the sociology of religion. See Ellwood, Roof, Hamilton, Heelas and Woodhead. Zaehner had already untangled the problem in "Self-deification," Chapter VI of his *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (1960).

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