

# THE COMMODIFICATION OF WITCHCRAFT

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*The modern Witchcraft movement began in small family-like groups. Increasing popularity and market forces have influenced both the practices and beliefs of contemporary Witchcraft. Three websites of prominent Australia Witches are analysed to identify the variations in the effects of commodification on Witchcraft. To varying degrees, commodified Witchcraft facilitates an ideology of consumption by attempting to manipulate people's decisions about their spiritual practices for the purpose of selling commodities such as books of spells and bottles of lotion. The websites of commodified Witchcraft play on people's sense of isolation and alienation, offering the hedonist consumption of commodities as solutions, substituting the purchase of commodities for engagement with personal self-discovery. These new forms of oppression need to be weighed against the freedom of individualism and new forms of spirituality facilitated by consumerism.*

## Introduction

Contemporary Witchcraft (or Wicca) is a modern spirituality not typically organised as a formal religious institution, although there are a number of organisational loci of the modern Witchcraft movement (Luhrmann, 1989; York, 1995; Hume, 1997; Berger, 1999; Hutton, 1999; Griffin, 2000; Greenwood, 2000). The beliefs of contemporary Witchcraft are elegantly described on one of the websites analysed below:

Wicca is a Pagan religion meaning that Wiccans feel love for and a connection with nature and see it as sacred. Wiccans worship two early forms of deity, the Great Mother Goddess and her consort, the Horned God, but is Goddess centred and welcomes men and women. Wiccans celebrate eight religious festivals a year, called Sabbats and these are based on the passing of the seasons and agricultural cycles, like the sowing and harvesting of crops, and astronomical events, like the solstices and equinoxes ... When a women calls herself a Witch she is confronting patriarchal societies' prejudice towards independent and empowered women. (Horne, 2000)

The modern revival of Witchcraft as it first appeared in the 1950s in England

and the United States was a secretive religion. Published studies suggest that it was not commodified, in the sense that people did not pay to learn or to participate in Witchcraft (Luhrmann, 1989; Hutton, 1999; Pearson, 2000). It was typically practiced in small groups of people who developed close friendships, meeting regularly in each other's homes or in secluded outdoor locations.

However, as Witchcraft has gained public acceptance, a version of Witchcraft has emerged that is highly commodified. This is reflected in the growing numbers of commercial, or 'trade' books on Witchcraft, fee paying training courses, glossy magazines, and movies and television soaps that feature Witches. While people have always paid for books, conferences, and ritual tools, in the past these commodified aspects of Witchcraft tended to be peripheral to the main form of participation which was external to market exchanges. In contrast, as Witchcraft has become increasingly popularised, the opportunities for participation in Witchcraft are increasingly through market exchanges such as purchasing 'how to' books and videos, attending fee paying training courses, and the purchase of ritual tools and accessories. I use 'Wicca' to refer to the older initiatory tradition, and 'commodified Witchcraft' to refer to the more recent popularised movement.

This paper has two goals. First, I identify some of the differences in the social organisation of Wicca and commodified Witchcraft. Second, I examine how the commodification of Witchcraft influences the spiritual practices and religious beliefs of practitioners. Specifically, I identify the different ways in which Witches have responded to, and been influenced by, the processes of commodification.

Witchcraft and the broader Pagan movement overlap with, but are distinct from, the New Age (York, 1995). Hanegraaff's (1999) discussion of the links between New Age Religion and secular society provides a useful starting point for the analysis of commodified Witchcraft. Hanegraaff (1999:153) argues that New Age religion is a set of spiritual practices that are detached from religious institutional traditions. The secular foundations to New Age religion mean that 'religion becomes solely a matter of individual choice, and detaches itself from religious institutions, i.e. from exclusive commitment to specific "religions".' Popularisation and the rise of individual choice through consumerism are central to the distinction between Wicca and commodified Witchcraft.

Similar to more general sociological analysis of consumerism (Giddens, 1991), many analysts of contemporary religion have celebrated the choice and freedom made available when religion is de-traditionalised, when established institutional authorities lose their influence. First, consumerism brings new pleasures. Heelas (1993: 110), for example, summarises: 'In a nutshell, the argument is that the "cultural logic of late capitalism", to use Jameson's famous expression, has generated a postmodern consumer culture; and those involved can treat New Age provisions as consuming delights of an appropriate postmodern variety.' Second, consumerism provides new forms of social bonds. Lyon (2000) suggests that New Age religious consumerism represents the reconstruction of religious identities to facilitate these new forms of

social bonds as traditional work place and communal identities disintegrate. Further, Lyon (2000: 75) argues that 'consumption ... democratizes culture', with the consequent loss of traditional authority of established religious traditions. Finally, consumerism reduces the influence of authoritarian traditions. As Moore (2000: 272) puts it: 'When people think of religion as something to be sold rather than as something imposed - something advanced in the prospect of a mutually beneficial contract, which parties are free to accept or reject - religious toleration advances.'

According to this line of argument the commodification of religion reinvigorates and frees contemporary spirituality from the oppressive bonds of traditional institutional forms. Heatherington (1992: 97), for example, celebrates the acts of consumption at the Stonehenge festivals as important practices that sustain the development of new identities.

However, it is a mistake to romanticise this trend. There are winners and losers in consumerist culture (Ezzy, in press; Bauman, 1989; Warde, 1994). While New Age religion is defined by its detachment from traditional religious institutions this does not make it a religion of individual choice, without any institutional focus or restrictions. Rather, the institutional arrangements of secular society constrain and shape the 'choices' that are available in significant ways. A spirituality based in the quasi-religious institutions of the market, to use Hanegraaff's (1999: 148) own phrase, does not necessarily result in free and unfettered choice of belief. Rather, the institutional foundations in the secular market shape choices about belief in a similar way to the shaping of belief and practice by traditional religious institutions.

Commodified Witchcraft does not simply allow greater individual choice and freedom, liberating the Witch from the potentially authoritarian family-like networks that characterised the earlier forms of Witchcraft. Commodified Witchcraft is also shaped by the values and priorities embodied in the secular institutions on which it is founded. It is these priorities and influences of the institution of the secular market on commodified Witchcraft that this paper examines.

The research reported here is based on an analysis of the websites of three prominent Australian Witches: Deborah Gray, Fiona Horne, and Wendy Rule. Deborah Gray and Fiona Horne are part of mainstream Australian culture, having published best-selling popular books, written articles and columns in magazines such as *New Idea*, and appeared on day time television talk shows. Wendy Rule is less mainstream, her popularity and media exposure is more limited and focused mainly on her music. The websites provide an useful site for analysis as they are broadly comparable, each containing similar structural elements, and they highlight the content and form of presentation of self, by these Witches, to the general public. I use a cultural studies method of analysis that examines these sites to illustrate more general cultural trends (Alasuutari, 1995).

## **Commodified Witchcraft**

Commodified Witchcraft can be defined as a set of products inscribed with beliefs and practices broadly consistent with the religion of Witchcraft, but for which the dominant institutional goal is profit. The websites of Deborah Gray, Fiona Horne, and Wendy Rule, all clearly qualify as commodified Witchcraft by this criteria. The main aim of their websites is to encourage people to buy their products. Similar to Pedlar & Hutchison's (2000) description of the commodification of disability I identify the two main characteristics of commodified Witchcraft as first, placing a money value on providing information and products related to Witchcraft, and second, providing information and products through organisations that have profit as their primary aim.

While the websites analysed in this paper are clearly exemplars of commodified Witchcraft, this should not be taken as an indication of the personal practices and beliefs of the particular Witches whose names are associated with the sites. The paper focuses on the representation of Witchcraft in the public domain and mainstream media, as exemplified by the respective websites.

Commodified Witchcraft is a different type of Witchcraft not simply because of the apparent dominance of the profit motive, but because it is embedded in a different set of social relationships. This is best illustrated through Carrier's (1991) analysis of the difference between a gift and a commodity. Drawing on Mauss, Carrier argues that what differentiates gifts from commodities is the structure of the relationship within which the exchange is made. Gifts are made between people who are in a social relationship that is family-like or *Gemeinschaft* in character. In contrast, 'commodity transactors are self-interested, independent individuals who exchange with people with whom they have no enduring links or obligations' (Carrier, 1991: 122). Gifts and commodities are differentiated on the basis of the different sorts of relationships within which they are produced. Commodity exchange is not the only possible form of exchange in contemporary society. A purchased bottle of wine may become a gift between lovers. Rather, in contemporary society exchange relations tend to be dominated by commodities, and commodified social relations. Carrier identifies three aspects of social relationships that differentiate gifts from commodities.

First, gift transactions are obligatory. The obligation derives from a sense of social and ethical responsibility to the other in the relationship. To give and receive gifts recreates and affirms the relationship between two people. In contrast, commodity exchange dissolves the link between two parties. Indeed, commodity transactions require that the two parties be free and independent, so they can protect their own interests. The independence of people who exchange commodities stands in opposition to people who exchange gifts that tie them into social relationships of mutual obligation.

Second, gifts are inalienable, retaining the identity of the giver, symbolising the relationship between the recipient and the giver. To reject a gift is to reject the

giver. In contrast, commodities are alienated. Once exchanged the commodity does not symbolise a link with the person who sold it. Gifts are unique, commodities are easily substitutable, and can be replaced without problem.

Third, gift givers are engaged in the fulfilment of moral obligations. People who give gifts are morally obligated to repay the gift, and sustain their relationship with the giver. In contrast, a transaction between buyer and seller suggests nothing about the moral character of either. Commodity transactions are impersonal and amoral, whereas gift giving and receiving is personal and enmeshes the participants in a set of moral obligations.

These distinctions between gifts and commodities can be used to differentiate non-commodified Wicca from commodified Witchcraft. An unpublished manuscript written by an Australian Wiccan titled 'Craft for Sale?' (Alicia, 1995) provides a clear example of this difference. Alicia argues against the commodification of Witchcraft precisely on the basis that Wicca can only be learnt as a gift:

In the way that I was taught witchcraft [Wicca], straight and old fashioned as it was, you did not sell what you were taught, just as you did not pay to learn it ... the idea of money never entered into it. Trust, love, a personal dedication to the service of the Old Ones - all these things were demanded and freely given, but money? Hardly! ... And those relationships that develop between teacher and student .. should be like shining stars of experience - not the grubby, commercial, limited, production-line feed-out of bought and paid for rituals. (Alicia, 1995: 1)

Learning Wicca, as described by Alicia, has all the characteristics of a gift as described by Carrier. Skills and knowledge are transferred as part of a personal relationship of trust. Learning Wicca is not amenable to a production line, in which one learning experience can substitute for another, but involves developing a personal, inalienable, relationship between the teacher and student. Finally, having been taught Wicca for free, the initiate is morally obliged to pass their learning on, as a gift, for free. This account is consistent with published academic studies of Wicca that describe practices and knowledge passed on without payment and as part of close ties of friendship (Luhmann, 1989; Berger, 1999).

Wiccans locate the teaching of their beliefs as an activity that should remain outside the market. They argue that knowledge about Witchcraft cannot and should not be commodified. Anderson (1990: 72) observes that 'To say something is properly regarded as a commodity is to claim that the norms of the market are appropriate in regulating its production, exchange, and enjoyment.' In contrast, if moral principles or ethical ideals suggest that market norms should not be applied to the thing or practice, then that good is not a proper commodity. For example, the problem with slavery is that it treats people, who are worthy of respect, as if they were merely objects to be used. Alicia argues that the teaching of Wicca should not be a commodity because this reduces esoteric knowledge about the sacred to a thing to be used. The

intimacy of personal relationships formed during Wicca training, and the thrill of personal discovery, are not things that should be bought and sold. Simply, the commodification of Wicca reduces the sacred to the profane.

A similar argument is reported by Moore (1994: 255) in his discussion of the influence of consumerist culture of American Christianity: 'Religion in the marketplace of culture has become an ordinary commodity.' Moore points out that Western societies have a long history of commercialising religion. The tele-evangelists were not the first, with critics of the process going back at least as far as Luther. However, what is distinct about the contemporary commodification of religion, according to Moore, is that it breaks down the distinction between the sacred and the profane. Indulgences were always a religious commodity. Under the influence of a commercial instrumentalism, commodified American Christianity is selling an increasing array of commodities which are harder and harder to distinguish from mainstream culture. What is the effect of the commercialisation of religion asks Moore (1994: 273)? "Is religion somehow not religion in the way it once was? Is it, in fact, nothing but a shallow appendage of secular life?"

However, even commodified Witchcraft retains some of its alternative and rebellious character. The label 'Witch' suggest a person who is unconventional, and to be feared, and perhaps persecuted. 'It is a marvellous rallying point for a counter-culture, and also one of the few images of independent female power in early modern European civilization' (Hutton, 1993: 335). However, to argue that commodified Witchcraft retains sacred dimensions requires more than demonstrating that it is counter-cultural.

People become involved in Paganism and Witchcraft for a variety of reasons, but they are typically associated with a search for a religious frame that provides life with meaning, celebrates divinity, and offers comfort and security (Hume, 1997: 83). Consistent with Heelas' (1996) analysis of 'serious' New Age seekers, people are typically described as becoming interested in Wicca as part of a quest for self development, personal growth, or the mastery of esoteric knowledge (Adler, 1979).

Commodified Witchcraft provides a different logic or basis for participation. In the 1970s Christopher Lasch (1979) argued that commodification encouraged consumption as an alternative to protest or rebellion. Given the focus on self development of the New Age and Pagan spirituality it could similarly be argued that commodification encourages self-indulgent hedonism as an alternative to practices that might result in self-awareness and self-growth. Heelas (1996: 182) differentiates the 'serious' New Age seeker from the 'casual part-timer'. The consumerist outlook of the casual part-timer leads to pleasure-seeking participation 'dipping in and out of activities, enjoying what is on offer without taking anything serious enough to undermine the spirit of consumption.' To convert, suggests Heelas, to the serious seeker requires a relinquishment of the consumerist role. A similar process appears to be occurring with Witches. Commodified Witchcraft is designed to be attractive to casual, pleasure seeking part-time consumers. To take Witchcraft seriously is to

engage with a religious belief system and set of spiritual practices that, similar to the 'serious' New Age practices described by Heelas, requires self-discipline and a relinquishment of the consumerist role.

The different rationale for participation that characterises commodified Witchcraft is a product of the different priorities created by a set of spiritual practices located in the secular institution of the market and focused on consumption:

[T]he propaganda of consumption turns alienation itself into a commodity. It addresses itself to the spiritual desolation of modern life and proposes consumption as the cure. It not only promises to palliate all the old unhappiness to which flesh is heir; it creates or exacerbates new forms of unhappiness - personal insecurity, status anxiety, anxiety in parents about their ability to satisfy the needs of the young. Do you look dowdy next to your neighbours? Do you own a car inferior to theirs? Are your children healthy? As popular? Doing as well in school? Advertising institutionalizes envy and its attendant anxieties. (Lasch, 1979: 73)

The advertising of commodified Witchcraft is not simply designed to describe a product and explain its value. Advertising is designed to advocate consumption as a way of life, as a solution to the loneliness, anxiety, and futility of modern life. More than this, advertising actively seeks to create this restless unease amongst consumers who will then restlessly move from one moment of consumption to the next, continually dissatisfied, but continually searching for the promised release that never arrives. 'Consumption promises to fill the aching void; hence the attempt to surround commodities with an aura of romance; with allusions to exotic places and vivid experiences; and with images of female breasts from which all blessings flow' (Lasch, 1979: 72-3).

Commodified Witchcraft becomes a moment of hedonistic consumption, rather than a moment of self-growth. Hedonistic consumption may be an opportunity for the celebration of an individualized religious lifestyle, as Heatherington (1992) argues. However, in its commodified form, the myths of Witchcraft are not used to encourage self-development, or self-understanding, but to support the claim, and the consumer's fantasy, that the product will provide the anticipated pleasure it offers. These trends are clear in the advertisements for the 'Goddess of Love Potion' on Deborah Gray's website.

Goddess of Love Potion. Attract Your Soulmate! ... Shrouded in mystery for thousands of years, its magical powers of seduction are now finally revealed by Australia's "White Witch", Deborah Gray, who offers it to all those wishing to attract their soulmate, rediscover their true love, and bring passion and desire into their lives.' (Gray, 2000)

Deborah Gray does not offer advice on her website about how the 'ancient wisdom' of Witchcraft might be used to address the spiritual, emotional, or relationship problems experienced by contemporary young women. Rather, she offers

consumption as a way of dealing with these frustrations. Her webpages are an advertisement not only for her products, but for consumption as a way of addressing the problems of social life.

Similarly, Fiona Horne's webpage advertising her latest book *Life's a Witch: A handbook for teen witches* begins with: 'Problems at school? Problems at home? *Life's A Witch* is packed with spells, advice, ideas and inspiration to deal with peer pressure, pimple pressure and parent pressure. Funny, fun and fantastic, *Life's A Witch* helps you feel good about yourself, your family, friends and planet ...' The structure of this advertisement is consistent with Lasch's analysis. It plays on a sense of alienation and offers a commodity, a book, as the solution.

Consumerism does not aim to satisfy needs. Rather, it aims to stimulate desire, but to never fully satisfy that desire. The ideal consumer is the person who takes pleasure in the moment of consumption, but as soon as this moment is completed, feels unsatisfied, and feels the need to move on to a new act of consumption. While advertising seduces consumers, Bauman (1998: 26) argues that consumers seek actively to be seduced. 'They live from attraction to attraction, from temptation to temptation'. The compulsion to consume feels like it is freely chosen. They choose between the varieties that are available, they judge and consider their options. However, the identity of being a consumer is not chosen, and the market place has come to dominate their lives.

Douglas and Isherwood (1979) argue that commodities are not simply a means of escaping the world through hedonistic consumption. Rather, material goods are the basic carriers of cultural meanings for most societies, locating people in their social world. It could therefore be argued that the purveyors of commodified Witchcraft cannot be criticised simply because they offer goods for sale. Material goods have always been the carriers of meaning, and the goods provided by commodified Witchcraft allow people to locate themselves in the cultural world of Witchcraft. To a certain extent this is true. Without any consumer goods there would be little in the way of culture. Further, because some Witches offer some goods for sale, this does not necessarily indicate that all Witches participating in contemporary consumerist culture have been completely taken over by the influence of the market.

According to Douglas and Isherwood consumer choice is not simply constrained by the seductive power of advertisers, but also by the power of people who control goods to utilise strategies of exclusion and monopoly to their advantage. 'Their rational strategy then would be to erect barriers against entry, to consolidate control of opportunities, and to use techniques of exclusion' (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979: 89). Precisely these sorts of strategies can be observed in the websites of commodified Witchcraft.

The aim of Deborah Gray's (2000) 'About Me' page is not so much to provide information about Deborah Gray *per se*, rather the aim of the page is to provide information about Deborah Gray that is designed to encourage you to buy her products. Her three books and her 'Goddess of Love Potion' feature prominently on the page.

Two types of claims are utilised to suggest you should buy her products. First, she claims to have access to ancient wisdom. She was 'born into a long heritage of Celtic magic' and 'initiated as a teenager into an Ancient Druid Circle' and she 'inherited her knowledge of parapsychology and spellcasting from one of the world's few remaining Druid Master's [sic.]'. The structure of these claims are important. They suggest access to ancient information and traditions, but do not provide any substantial information about the traditions or communities she refers to, or any information about how the interested person might access these, apart from through Deborah Gray. The Druids are organised into a number of different groups that have their own books and websites where you would expect to find further information about one of the 'few remaining Druid Master's [sic.]'. There are no links to these sites, or discussion of their books. Even the name of this 'Druid Master' is not provided, so it is impossible to follow up this information in any way other than through buying Deborah Gray's commodities. Deborah Gray's website clearly utilises strategies of exclusion and attempts to retain a monopoly on the information it offers.

Deborah Gray's second claim to authority is her commercial success. The biography notes she has sold large numbers of books, had books translated into other languages, and written for some of Australia's 'leading magazines'. For a Witch to use popular success as a basis for her authority, while perhaps convincing to the general public, seems rather incongruous to anyone familiar with the sometimes elitist and often profoundly secretive tradition from which the Witchcraft revival has grown. However, it is clear that the website is designed to appeal to people who are largely unfamiliar with the established language and traditions of Witchcraft. This is clearer in an earlier version of the website that contained the claim that she was initiated into an 'Ancient Druid Coven'. This phrase is an oxymoron similar to suggesting that a person had been to a Quaker Mass. Druids have 'circles' and Witches have 'covens', but I have been unable to locate any reference to a 'Druid Coven' in published academic and practitioner texts on the Pagan movement. Given the flux and lack of centralised authority in the Pagan movement it is quite possible that Deborah Gray was initiated by someone who claimed to be a Druid and ran a group called a 'coven'. However, the use of such language suggests the page is designed to attract people relatively unfamiliar with existing Paganism.

Commodification involves strategies of exclusion and attempts to develop monopolies (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). Deborah Gray's website utilises these techniques through an absence of links to other related websites and through the with-holding of names and specific information that might encourage interested people to pursue information elsewhere. Further, the site is designed to attract people relatively unfamiliar with other sources of information about Witchcraft, and as a consequence, who will find it more difficult to resist the strategies of exclusion and monopoly built into the site.

Fiona Horne's (2000) website's biographical page on 'Wicca' has some similarities to Deborah Gray's but the commodified aspects are not as central to her

narrative and the nature of her claims to authority are more circumspect. Fiona Horne focuses on the two books she has written about Witchcraft, describing the decisions that led to writing these books and the process of her publicly coming out of the 'broom closet' as a Witch. She makes a few comments about the success of her books, but these are more as asides rather than as claims used to assert her authority. There are no claims to ancient wisdom or initiatory lineage. Rather, her argument for the value of Witchcraft is that it worked for her and that it has much to offer contemporary society: 'Witchcraft is fascinating, logical, magickal, holy and sexy religion that is nature worshipping and Goddess-oriented. All good things in these stressed out, ecologically damaged, patriarchal times.' The structure of this explanation is important. These sentences appear at the end of her web-page. While they clearly can be construed as an argument for the value of Fiona Horne's books, and attempt to convince people to buy them, they appear to also be an argument for the value of Witchcraft in general. These are prefaced by a long paragraph that describes the main beliefs of Witchcraft that utilise language and describe beliefs consistent with existing published Witchcraft texts. Further, elsewhere on her website are a number of links to other Witchcraft webpages and organisations. In other words, Fiona Horne's webpage does not engage in the strong strategies of exclusion and monopoly utilised on Deborah Gray's website. Fiona Horne's website provides information and links that encourage people to pursue their interest in Witchcraft for themselves. The website encourages you to buy Fiona's books as part of your quest for self-understanding, but also provides links and information that might be used as a basis for pursuing books, organisations, and commodities on Witchcraft other than those provided by Fiona Horne.

Wendy Rule's (2000) introductory web page is the least commodified of the three. It contains only general allusions to 'my music', and no references to her albums by name. She makes no claims to ancient lineage or initiatory authority. Rather, she provides an extensive account of how she first discovered Witchcraft and a link to a bookshop's website where further information can be obtained. Significantly, this is a link to a commercial organisation, but an external link nonetheless. She provides a detailed paragraph explaining why Witchcraft has been rewarding for her as a personal journey. Although she refers to her music at the end of this paragraph, the point of the paragraph is not simply to convince the reader to buy the music, but to explain to the reader why they also might find Witchcraft rewarding and interesting. That is to say, the Witchcraft described does not only involve listening to Wendy Rule's music. In fact, her music is peripheral to the Witchcraft practices described. This paragraph, and the subsequent paragraphs, utilise language and describe beliefs consistent with existing published Witchcraft texts. Other pages on Wendy Rule's site are more commodified, although still retain a greater emphasis on self-understanding rather than the purchase of products. The page describing her play 'An Underworld Journey' is both an advertisement, although there are no links to sites or pages from which tickets could be purchased, and an

invitation to explore for yourself similar themes to those Wendy Rule has been exploring whilst writing her play.

Participation in commodity exchange does not necessarily lead to the subordination of all aspects of a product to marketing rationale. This is achieved on many Witchcraft websites through the relegation of commodities to relatively minor parts. For example, the sale of a book of poetry on the website of Doreen Valiente (2000), a leading British Wiccan, is justified as a venture that does not seek economic returns, but is a project of the website's owner to fulfil a dying wish of Doreen Valiente. Similarly, the three websites discussed here vary in the extent to which the commodities they offer, and the way they offer these commodities, have been influenced by the logical and values of consumerist culture.

The emphasis of the websites of both Fiona Horne and Deborah Gray on commercial success has led to an increased focus on hedonistic individualism, substituting the purchase of commodities for personal growth. However, the hedonistic pleasure of consuming has replaced the discipline of self-discovery to varying degrees. Both Fiona Horne and Wendy Rule carefully describe their own discovery of Witchcraft as a journey of self-discovery and self-understanding that transcends hedonistic consumerist logic. Further, Fiona Horne discusses the relationship of Witchcraft to broader social issues, and Wendy Rule has some detailed reflections on the ethical guidelines appropriate for Witchcraft. In contrast, Deborah Gray has no such account of self-discovery, relying instead on initiation by a 'Druid Master' for her authority, and does not discuss ethical or social issues. Similarly, Moore (1994) has observed that the commercialised religion in America loses its critical and prophetic edge.

In summary, the websites of Deborah Gray, Fiona Horne, and Wendy Rule embrace the logic of commodified Witchcraft to varying degrees. Deborah Gray's site is the most influenced by the logic of consumerist culture. Her site utilises strong strategies of exclusions and attempts to retain a monopoly of information, appealing to people who are broadly unfamiliar with other sources of information on Witchcraft. The sites of Deborah Gray, and to a lesser extent Fiona Horne, play on people's sense of isolation and alienation, offering commodities as solutions. Fiona Horne and Wendy Rule's sites provide some information that might encourage individuals to engage in their own experience of self-discovery external to the market, whereas Deborah Gray's site only offers the purchase of commodities. Finally, Fiona Horne and Wendy Rule's sites engage in ethical and political commentary that is absent from Deborah Gray's site. Deborah Gray's site substitutes the purchase of commodities for engagement with a discussion of personal development or social and ethical issues.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that commodified Witchcraft is different in significant ways from non-commodified Wicca. Although there is a wide spectrum in between, I

characterised commodified Witchcraft as Witchcraft in which the majority of exchanges are commodity exchanges. In contrast, Wicca is characterised by the exchange of both knowledge and goods as gifts, external to the market. These gifts are embedded in familial-like social relationships of mutual and moral obligation. In contrast, commodified Witchcraft involves the exchange of commodities embedded in social relationships that are dissolved by the exchange, with no ongoing obligations.

There are reasons to celebrate the commodification of religion, of which commodified Witchcraft is only one exemplar. Consumerist religion brings new pleasures, provides new forms of social bonds, and advances religious toleration. However, the freedom gained by the reduced influence of older institutional frameworks must be weighed against the influence of the new institutional context of the market. The extent to which Witchcraft is influenced by the logic of consumerism varies. Some Witches seem to be more concerned with commercial success, other Witches appear to be trying to marry commercial success and the goals of personal growth.

When the influences of the market are wholly assimilated, commodified Witchcraft facilitates its own ideology of consumption by attempting to manipulate people's decisions about their spiritual practices for the purpose of selling commodities such as books of spells and bottles of lotion. The imagined pleasure of anticipated consumption is central to the experience of commodified Witchcraft. Advertisements encourage consumers to conjure up images of the satisfaction they anticipate once an item has been purchased (Campbell, 1995). Whether these commodities actually provide the satisfaction they offer requires more research. However, the logic of commodified consumerism is to continually stimulate desire without every satisfying it for very long, thus encouraging the consumer to return to the market and engage in further purchases.

The websites of commodified Witchcraft embrace the logic of commodification. They often play on people's sense of isolation and alienation, offering commodities as solutions. To varying degrees, they utilise strategies of exclusion and monopoly over information. Some sites provide information that individuals might use on their own experience of self-discovery external to the market, some sites only offer commodities, substituting the purchase of commodities for engagement with personal and ethical issues.

However, this analysis should not be taken as an argument that all commodified Witchcraft is a cynical instrumental attempt to make money. In his discussion of Jim Bakker, Moore (1994: 251) observes:

Heritage USA and the PTL were efforts to make money by selling religion, but they were not, for all that, merely exploitative. Try telling Bakker's supporters that they were people on the economic edge who sacrificed their faith to the oppressive god of consumerism ... Bakker told people that they did not have to prove their Christianity by making the contemporary world an enemy.

Similarly, I would argue that Witchcraft does not have to separate itself from consumerist practices in order to retain its countercultural, prophetic, and spiritual dimensions. However, the market is not a neutral influence on contemporary religious practices. I have argued that the stronger the influence of the market on Witchcraft, the greater likelihood that it will lose its critical political edge, and that it will tend to become instrumental and materialistic, rather than transformative and encouraging of self-discovery.

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