Secrecy and Consumer Culture: An Exploration of Esotericism in Contemporary Western Society using the work of Simmel and Baudrillard[1]

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Esoteric knowledge seems no longer secret in Western contemporary society. It is part of consumer culture and 'secret wisdom' is no longer the privilege of an aristocracy of culture such as mystics or dervishes; it appears to be within every individual's reach. Exploring this issue with the works of Simmel and Baudrillard, this article will attempt firstly to understand the notion of secrecy, secondly to assess its place in consumer culture - or what Baudrillard would call hyperreality - and finally to evaluate its implication - that is that the proliferation of 'secret wisdom' might lead to a re-enchantment of Western society. However, the over-proliferation of this wisdom might have a totally reverse outcome in hyperreality. It could lead to a blasé attitude among some (over)consumers of secrecy and thus, paradoxically, towards a feeling of disenchantment.

Introduction

People involved in Alternative Spiritualities are part of what Zygmunt Bauman (1998) calls postmodern religions, and more specifically consumer religions. They consume products to gather and to enhance sensation. They can visit a 'New Age' healing centre for a few days, participate in a 'vision quest' and be initiated in shamanism, buy crystals and indigenous paraphernalia, learn astrology, etc. These objects for sale - books, tarot cards, crystals, etc - have long lost any taint of the demonic and have become common products. 'New Age' festivals and psychic fairs proliferate. Consultants, tarot card readers, clairvoyants and so on, offer their services not only in specialist shops and fairs, but also in more conventional shops - like craft shops and galleries. Many conventional book shops and music shops often have a stall specifically for 'New Age' books and recordings. An array of popular journals and magazines diffuse 'New Age' discourses; in the U.S.A. there are 100 'New Age' magazines and also 'New Age' radio stations (Heelas, 1993:112). These practices and beliefs are part of popular magic, and have become a consumer product in

contemporary society (Eleta, 1997).[2]

Setting aside the importation and westernisation of Eastern philosophies, New Age will be understood for this article as an element of perennism. That is an alternative spirituality which interprets the world as Monistic – the cosmos is perceived as having its elements deeply interrelated, it is a single ultimate principle, being, or force, underlying all reality, and rejects the notion of dualism, e.g. mind/body – and whose actors are attempting to develop their Human Potential Ethic – actors work on themselves for personal growth – by seeking Spiritual Knowledge – the way to develop oneself is through a pursuit of knowledge, be it the knowledge of the universe or of the self, the two being sometimes interrelated. It encompasses alternative spiritualities (e.g. Aquarian New Age, Neo-paganism) practised by individuals wanting to move away from mainstream religions. Perennism is also the simplification of Western Esotericism - that is a philosophy and a practice involving a 'secret knowledge'[3]; it includes, for example, alchemy, hermeticism, Christian Kabbala, Paracelsianism, and a number of initiatic societies.

Within perennism, esoteric knowledge is no longer secret (Schlegel, 1995; Trevelyan, 1984) and even appears to have become a public commodity (York, 2001; Werbner 1995). It appears that there is no more need to access 'secret wisdom' in groups because the access for individuals is now facilitated. Every spiritual technique - e.g. astrology, numerology, and occultist rituals - is now easy to find and to learn and there is no need to belong to any secret group. Secrecy, a key element of esotericism, has been opened up, and is now on the shelves of New Age bookshops, and even on the Internet. As Zygmunt Bauman (1998) notices, if transcendence was once the privilege of an aristocracy of culture such as mystics, ascetic monks, dervishes or occultist leaders, now this transcendence is in every individual's reach, is part of consumer culture, and is thus commodified.

What does this imply for social actors involved in these spiritualities? What does it mean for a 'secret knowledge' to be commodified? Jean Baudrillard, whose theories are sometimes seen as being more about science fiction than about sociology (Rojek and Turner, 1993), can nevertheless help to answer this question. But before addressing this issue, Georg Simmel (1991), a social theorist of another fin-de-siècle, can shed some light on the sociological notion of secrecy.

Simmel and Secrecy

The working assumption for this essay is that from the Renaissance to the 1970s, esoteric knowledge was kept secret - to a certain extent - among a spiritual intelligentsia. But why? Inspired by my reading of Simmel, I first explore the notion of secrecy and, secondly, discover three ideal-types of answers to my question:

> Simmel defines the secret society as an interactional unit characterized in its totality by the fact that reciprocal relations among its members are governed by the protective function of secrecy. This central feature is established on a dual

> contingency: 1) members of the interactional unit are concerned with the protection of ideas, objects, activities, and/or sentiments to which they attach positive value (i.e., which are rewarding to them); 2) the members seek this protection by controlling the distribution of information about the valued elements (i.e. by creating and maintaining relevant conditions of ignorance in the external environment). (Hazelrigg, 1969: 324)

Simmel (1991:41) writes that at one moment of history, at one geographical place, an idea that was manifested and commonly held can become a secret after a structural change; and *vice versa,* the secret can suddenly become revealed and be 'open'. Simmel (1991:67) remarks that secret societies emerge everywhere as a correlate of despotism and of police control for protection against the violent pressure of central powers. And, he continues (1991:88), as a general rule, the proliferation of secret societies is the proof of the absence of public freedom and a reaction arising from the need for liberty.

In this perspective, Simmel (1991:64) remarks that the ostensible finality of the secret is, before all, protection. But could something else be understood for esotericism? The secret can, in this case, be fathomed as a finality in itself. As Simmel explains (1991:79), the substance of those secret societies is a secret doctrine, a theoretical knowledge; it is also mystic, religious. It is a knowledge that should not be spread among the 'common' people. Initiated people, therefore, form a community to preserve the secret; a secret concealed in nature, visions, religions and in every place that is considered hierophanic.

But why would this knowledge be kept secret among a spiritual intelligentsia? Inspired by my reading of Simmel (1991), I find three ideal-types of answers:

1- For protection, as mentioned above. In this case, the secret is like a virus that is fighting to survive inside the body: i.e. the society. Initiates are selected and are trusted not to make public the existence of the group.

2- For Power. The secret gives a sense of power for those maintaining it. Keeping a knowledge secret inflates the importance of this erudition, and this can give the holder social prestige. As Wedgwood (1930: 139) writes, as inspired by Simmel's excursus (1991: 52-63) on ornamentation:

> In every individual there are two conflicting impulses: the one to resemble his fellows; the other to be different from them. Human beings are gregarious but they are also individualists. While everyone wishes to remain within the community, every normal individual desires to be in some degree outstanding in that community. Membership of a secret society provides a happy issue from the impasse arising from these conflicting desires. The very possession of a secret, as Simmel has emphasized, gives social prestige.

> The separation into a secret society can thus lead to an ego-valorisation. People isolating themselves, in this case, might want to feel that they are above 'common' people (Simmel, 1991:93).

3- For a pedagogical purpose. In this case the secret is a finality in itself as mentioned above. Knowing the doctrine is not always the goal esotericists wish to achieve, but the experience acquired through this search is the key to the gnosis.

Gurdjieff (1978:240), an esotericist, describes meeting a 'wise man' on one of his many trips. The man expressed his beliefs in these words:

> Understanding is the essence obtained from information intentionally learned and from all kinds of experiences personally experienced. For example, if my own beloved brother were to come to me here at this moment and urgently entreat me to give him merely a tenth part of my understanding, and if I myself wished with my whole being to do so, yet I could not, in spite of my most ardent desire, give him even the thousandth part of this understanding, as he has neither the knowledge nor the experience which I have quite accidentally acquired and lived through in my life. [...] It is a hundred times easier, as it is said in the Gospels, 'for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle' than for anyone to give to another the understanding formed in him [sic] about anything whatsoever.

In this perspective, the knowledge of a secret does not hold all of the answers for the seeker. Also, at times, the doctrine is not meant for to be secret abstract knowledge, but at the very most, the practical details of a ritual. In this case, it is not the 'what' to know that is important, but the 'how' to understand. This is what the term *disciplina arcani* suggests:

> [...] the fact that the mysteries of religion, the ultimate nature of reality, the hidden forces of cosmic order, and the hieroglyphs of the visible world do not lend themselves to immediate comprehension or to a didactic or univocal explanation, but must be the object of a progressive penetration at several levels by each seeker of knowledge. (Faivre, 1987:159)

Within this perspective, the goal of esotericism is to pass successive stages of advancement toward mystical enlightenment or realisation. These initiates are not hiding the knowledge, rather they create clues, rites of passage, for the neophytes to find and to pass. Every time the latter succeed in a stage, they experience the knowledge and feel it more deeply; they know it corporeally. Therefore, a doctrine will be kept secret for people who want to find it, mainly to force them to gain the experience of this knowledge.[4] For example, Alchemists write in a jargon to describe their experiments and the products they are utilising. They are using symbols to describe the elements they are manipulating, e.g. the sun is the equivalent of gold because they are both yellow, Mars represents iron because both are symbols of war. Alchemy is a work of patience to develop the divine spark, a work of perseverance not only to work on nature but also to understand alchemical knowledge encoded in riddles that provide clues, only if correctly resolved. For example, alchemy manuals suggest the use of vitriol in first experiments. Vitriol is presented in the literature (Cavendish, 1977:177) as a chemical product but really means, by notarikon[5], Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem: 'visit the interior of the earth and

by purifying you will find the secret stone'. If the neophytes do not decipher the clue, they will be hindered in their quest for knowledge. If they persevere and finally resolve the riddle, they will be enlightened and ready for the next step, and will progressively learn the secret of alchemy and develop their divine spark.

The analysis of the notion of secret is multi-layered - it can be that of a group or that of the universe (Faivre, 1999) - and is beyond the scope of this paper. However, one of the many ways to find the secret of the universe is through the method of correspondence (Faivre, 1994; Pearson, 2000); that is a process of establishing common denominations between signs and symbols in the hope of obtaining an illumination and/or superior knowledge. It is believed that real and symbolic correspondences exist throughout all parts of the universe, both visible and invisible. This homo-analogical principle considers that things that are similar exert an influence on one another by virtue of the correspondences that unite all visible and invisible things to one another. It is a kind of hermeneutics which searches for some divine signatures, whether in holy text or in nature.

The entire universe appears to be a huge theatre of mirrors in which every object hides a secret, in which everything is a sign that hides mystery. If esotericists view the world as a theatre full of signs to be deciphered, Baudrillard (see below) would argue that the world is a great Television screen – or an Imax theatre - full of signs, but these signs can never be deciphered because, for him, reality has disappeared for ever; it is now hyper-reality, the collapse of reality.[6] For Baudrillard (1995:4),

> The world is like a book. The secret of a book is always inscribed on a single page. The rest is nothing but gloss and repetition. The ultimate finesse is to make this page disappear once the book is complete. Hence no one will guess what it is about (always the perfect crime). Yet this page remains dispersed within the book, between the lines; the body remains dispersed throughout its scattered limbs, and one ought to be able to reconstitute it without the secret being lifted. This anagrammatic dispersion of things is essential to their symbolic absence, to the force of their illusion.

Esotericists appear to have a more positive approach than Baudrillard; for them it is possible to find this page. However, it could be argued that this page has become harder to find in consumer culture. The signs that previous esotericists were looking for no longer make reference to a secret knowledge in the consuming world but to other signs ad infinitum. I will be arguing that 'esoteric knowledge' has merged with hyper-reality to create a 'McDonaldised Occult culture'.

Baudrillard and Hyper-Reality

For the young Baudrillard, who was at that age a neo-Marxist, consumer society was an extension of productive forces. In this society, consumers' needs and pleasures were constrained and institutionalised. After having socialised the proletarian masses into a labour force, the industrial system went further to fulfil itself and indoctrinated

the masses into a force of consumption. Baudrillard argued that consumers of the 20th century were unconscious and unorganised, just as workers appear to have been at the beginning of the 19th century (Baudrillard, 1970:1988).

However, with the proliferation of communications through the mass media, particularly television, and the full emergence of consumer society, Baudrillard moved away from a neo-Marxist perspective to a postmodern one (e.g. Baudrillard 1979; 1988; 1983; 1995).

The result of this proliferation, for Baudrillard, is that culture is now dominated by simulations – these are objects and discourses that have no firm origin, no referent, no ground or foundation. In consumer culture, signs get their meanings from their relations with each other, rather than by reference to some independent reality or standard. Baudrillard's theory of commodity culture removes any distinction between objects and representation. In their place he pictures a social world constructed out of models or 'simulacra' which have no foundation in any reality except their own; e.g. theme parks representing Hollywood movies or Mickey Mouse cartoons rather than 'reality'; day-time Television viewers speaking about soap opera characters rather than 'real' people; and popular news broadcasts that are more about entertainment than information about 'real' social issues.

In this world, there is no fixed meta-code. Modern society is saturated by images with the media generating a 'non-material', a de-materialised, concept of reality. It seems we live in an economy of signs in which signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real.

If Marx's vision of society was a giant workhouse, Baudrillard's vision is that modern society is now structured by signs and symbols in which it becomes difficult to distinguish the real from the unreal: from this, hyperreality - that is a situation in which reality has collapsed - takes over. This vision accurately portrays current Western postmodern times in which people seem to seek spectacle rather than meaning. Indeed some people involved in Alternative Spiritualities are inspired by horror stories (e.g. H.P. Lovecraft), SF stories (e.g. Star Wars, Star Trek), and Fantasy stories (e.g Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings*) to support their spirituality. These fictions offer a library of narratives to be borrowed and used by these practitioners. These practitioners use such works of fiction to express their spirituality; they use these stories as a source of inspiration to be selectively drawn on (see Harvey, 2000; Hume, 1997:55; Luhrmann, 1994:252-253).

For example, in 1966, in San Fransisco, Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan as a medium for the study of the Black Arts. In his *The Satanic Rituals*, LaVey (1972) refers to the metaphysics of H.P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft was a writer of weird fiction who wrote most of his tales during the 1920s and 1930s. He developed a pantheon of gods, the Great Old Ones, who are waiting in secrecy before coming back to earth to conquer the human race. Lovecraft always claimed that his stories were fictional and that he was a total agnostic. However, LaVey (1972), believing that 'fantasy plays an important part in any religious curriculum', developed some

rituals for his Church of Satan based on this fictional mythology. The following is a ceremony extract:

> N'kgnath ki'q Az-Athoth r'jyarh wh'fagh zhasa phr-tga nyena phragn'glu. Translation: Let us do honor to Azathoth, without whose laughter this world should not be.

The influence of Lovecraft is also felt in other groups such as the Order of the Trapezoid[7], from the Temple of Set[8], which is a chivalric order of knighthood. Groups such as The Temple of the Vampire[9] and the Order of the Vampyre[10] base their religiosity on vampire fictions. Even if some members ritually suck blood from each other 'from a finger pierced', their practice is only metaphorical vampirism (Introvigne, 1997). Today, a visit to the 'Gothic' and 'Vampyres' Internet Sites reveals large numbers of people wanting to become vampires and gain superpowers. Even if the vampire has been popular since the nineteenth century, 'it has never had as pervasive an appeal in American popular culture as it has had in the past decade' (Schopp, 1997:232). For Auerbach (1995:155), the character of the vampire was revised in the 1970s arousing a longing for personal transformation. During this period, vampires were 'more frightened than frightening' and became 'at their worst, edifying, Superman-like rescuers'[11]. Even some Gothic witches have a strong affinity with vampires (Hume, 1997:55). The vampire can be attractive to fans because it embodies power, and can be a source of inspiration for these spiritual actors.

It seems that for these social actors, the real and the unreal have imploded blurring the distinction between them and have become hyperreal. Further, these people might even be more comfortable with the 'unreal' than the 'real'. Indeed, very recently, some Star Wars fanatics have insisted that the Jedi Religion be included as a new religious category for the 2001 Australian census (Duff, 2001).

Seeking an Hyper-Real 'Secret Knowledge'

Two short case studies[12] will help us to understand what it means to seek 'esoteric knowledge' in hyper-reality.

Anne was a confirmed Atheist until her mother gave her a 'New Age' book written by Ruth Montgomery. This book made sense to her and she began to seek to experience the different aspects of the religious and spiritual field. She first was introduced to Christianity by a reborn Christian, but decided to leave the group she joined. She continued exploring the religious market and decided to follow different 'New Age' workshops. She tried many different practices, including regression, to discover who she was in her previous life. She said:

> I've tried to be regressed. Which didn't work on me. But then they say it can take many sessions before you sort of [experience something], and you need to feel comfortable with the person and whatever, which I never did. And at something like $120 a session you don't want to go to too many sessions before

you know that something's happening.

She also went to a Buddhist monastery and was ready to become a Buddhist monk. She left this place because she perceived that the monks were not completely 'authentic' at times; they were watching the Star Trek series on television too often. She admits that she was attracted by the 'glamorous part' - i.e. the part which offers 'mystical knowledge' - of the esoteric/New Age market and hoped to become enlightened. Although she never had any mystical experience, she still hopes that one day the light might come to her.

Steve has performed rituals in occultist groups for years. Tensions occurred in those groups and some people wanted to gain more power. Steve felt that politics was taking too much time away from the ritual of magic. He is now involved in a networking form of neo-paganism and calls himself an urban shaman.

He criticizes strongly the idea of people obtaining a 'universal knowledge'. He said:

> It's not uncommon for a third degree witch - which is the highest thing in most witchcraft systems -, to say that she can solve all your problems because she has access to universal knowledge. Absurdities like this are common.

He also makes a link between this 'universal knowledge' and the ephemeral nature of certain groups:

> People are in one group and they go to another group, another group, another group. It's very common. And there's lots of groups around too and everyone's claiming hidden knowledge and all this sort of rubbish.

Unlike Anne, Steve has had many spiritual/mystical experiences such as shamanic trances and astral travelling.

From these two examples, it can be seen that this kind of spiritual actor lives in a world of choice, which is part of the consumer society. In this world, the individual becomes his or her own authority; the modern/postmodern person in the west no longer tolerates being told what to believe and what to do. He or she is faced with an over-proliferation of 'esoteric knowledge', which he or she researches and experiences. This social actor is involved in what could be called the McDonaldised[13] Occult Culture: that is an arena of esoteric and occultist culture in consumer culture where anything goes, where esoteric philosophies (such as Swendenborg, Guénonism, Christian Kabbala) are mixed with conspiracy theories, alien intelligences, and Jedi religion; for example the X-Files with Kabbalah (Winslade, 2000). In this arena, half-truths are classed as scholarly work.

The McDonaldisation of Occult Culture is a process defined by Koenig (2001) and its central quality is fragmentation of knowledge. The Internet - which he uses as a case study – appears to be a strong medium for this type of knowledge and could be argued to be an element of Techno-Magick.

> Techno-magick is what articulates the channels of discourse that disseminate occult knowledge. Not only is technology caught up in the trope of magic, it becomes the medium through which this formerly hidden knowledge is now available to any individual with access to the internet. (Winslade, 2000:96)

With Techno-magick,

> The knowledge is always fluid, disembodied and haunting, never fully locatable, accessible at many different possible nodes, and available to anyone who wishes to engage in practice of magic. (Winslade, 2000:97)

Because of this fluidity – on the Internet more specifically, but also in everyday life - the gap between high culture and mass (or consumer) culture has never been so narrow. This allows the blending of 'serious/high/philosophical' esoteric knowledge with more popular and commodified versions.

This reduction of facts to hallucinatory speculations leaves no room for the controlling influence of truth, and results in an endlessly fragmented labyrinth of unlimited choices. The McDonaldised arena leaves only an aesthetic way of stimulation and navigation in order to find one's path. In this McDonaldised culture, esoteric knowledge appears to have become hyperreal. It is no longer connected to reality but to a consumer culture which mixes esoteric philosophies with popular culture such as Star Wars.

If it can be argued that this over-proliferation and commodification of 'esoteric knowledge' together re-enchant Western societies by making magic available for sale (Possamai, 2001a), it might, paradoxically have a negative effect on over-consumers of this knowledge: that of leading to a blasé attitude and a feeling of disenchantment. Coming back to Simmel (1997: 178) and his essay on 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', it could be argued that over-seeking mystical pleasure and 'esoteric knowledge' might make the seekers feel *blasé*, because this process

> ... agitates the nerves to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all. [...] An incapacity thus emerges to react to new sensations with the appropriate energy.

As in consumer society in general (Edwards, 2000:39-40), in this McDonaldised occult culture, the insatiability of limitless consumption of 'esoteric knowledge' is reached when the freedom of the market becomes the ultimate "unfreedom", where nothing is never enough.

What happens if a consumer of this McDonaldised occult culture has a *blasé* attitude and becomes disenchanted? These spiritual practitioners evolve in a cultic milieu, which is an imaginary place of many religious/spiritual groups and networks with different organisations and teleologies. Some parts of this milieu attract members; others, clients or patients; and others, spectators. In this milieu, many needs (e.g. craving for spirituality, healing tools, having fun) of seekers are fulfilled: however,

these needs vary. One person might visit a new religious movement, such as the Theosophical Society, to develop his/her 'higher' self and another one might just enjoy the talks and workshops that this society offers. On the other hand, someone on a 'deep' spiritual path might go to a shop to discover new techniques of enlightenment. In this milieu, spiritual actors are always on the move, trying out what best suits them for their research on knowledge (See Possamai, 2000). This cultic milieu also supports the McDonaldised occult culture that is diversely produced and consumed. These actors, as argued above, might feel *blasé* with such a culture, and might attempt to react to it. I will argue that we can expect four ideal-types of reactions.

However, before going through these types it might be interesting to note, in the light of the two previous case studies, that having mystical experiences does not seem to exclude consumerist motives. Mystical experiences can also be part of consumerism. As Daniel, one of my respondents (Possamai 2001a; 2001b), said:

> At around 20 I started developing an interest in various forms of yoga and I think in a lot of ways you definitely have to say I was a little bit compulsive, obsessive with it. I mean maybe I was too intense about it because I would do [...] for instance, exercises until I would get like a nose bleed sometimes. It was like you know striving almost too hard to achieve some goal, God knows what that was. I think they have a term for it these days: Spiritual Materialism. Every time you have a spiritual experience you get a little mark you know, or a higher rank. I must admit I was very much like that.

I now turn to explore the four ideal-types types of these *blasé* seekers:

Case 1- Seekers leave this New Age market and join a more mainstream group, or religion such as Christianity or Islam. For example, I encountered the case study of Joanne who was so dissatisfied with New Age that she moved to the Pentecostal church.

Case 2- They push their dissatisfaction even further by becoming atheist. In these two cases, people would be disenchanted with the networks from this cultic milieu.

Case 3- They can find a New Religious Movement and settle down, for example, the Theosophical Society, the Anthroposophical Society or Spiritualism. They may still consume spiritualities and not adhere to any article of faith, but there is a sense of following an acceptable authority such as a text of reference or the doctrine of a leader.

Case 4- They persevere on this 'McDonaldised' path, but still have faith in one day discovering the truth and understanding the mystery of things by themselves only; this being the case of Anne and Steve (see above). In these two last cases, and more specifically the last one, people would appear to have a calling. Max Weber (1970), in his essay on 'Science as a vocation', concludes that the quest for a scientific knowledge, within a society which undermines research and its workers, is a 'Vocation'; that is that people wanting to do an undervalued and undermined job must have a calling. It could also be said that the *blasé* actors who are seeking a

'secret knowledge' in consumer culture, and facing all the problems and constraints as underlined by Anne and Steve, can also be viewed as a vocation.

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Endnotes

[1] This article deals with the notion of secrecy in western culture only. For an exploration of secrecy in a non-western culture, see for example Turner (1978) and Weiner (1995).

[2] For more information on this form of commodification, see Possamai (2001a).

[3] Faivre (1994) warns us of the danger of reducing Esotericism (this multi-dimensional term) to the secrecy dimension. However, this approach will be refined in the next section on Simmel.

[4] How is the secret divulged to esotericists? How is the progressive penetration by the neophyte of the knowledge possible? I find three possibilities:

1- by oral tradition (learning with a 'master'); e.g. Gurdjieff (1963, Chapter 2),

2- by the deciphering of some manuscripts (the 'bibliophile' approach); e.g. Alchemic books (Cavendish, 1977), the Kabbalic deciphering of the Bible, and

3- by initiations (rituals), i.e. 'a body of rites and oral teaching whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated' (Eliade, 1958:x), i.e. spoken word, written word and 'corporeal word'.

[5] The reverse process of anagrammatising.

[6] Esotericists (e.g. Ferguson's (1981) book cover) and Baudrillard tend to use the same metaphor to describe reality, that of the Moebius Strip.

[7] Internet Site: http://www.trapezoid.org/statement.html (18/04/00)

[8] Internet Site: http://www.xeper.org/pub/tos/noframe.htm (18/04/00)

[9] Internet Site: http://home.netcom.com/~temple/vampire/html (18/04/00)

[10] Internet Site: http://www.xeper.org/pub/tos/orders/VAM-ST.htm (18/04/00)

[11] The author analyses the different perception of the vampire and discovers that before Bram Stoker's novel, narrators of vampire's stories - especially Byron - were not repelled by this being, on the contrary, there was hope of becoming equally uncommon. Between Stoker's Dracula and the 1970s, vampires were imprisoned in their transformation and did not offer an exaltation of their transfiguring power.

[12] In 1996-1997, I interviewed 35 people from Melbourne who would 'commonly' be described as New Agers. They were involved in practices such as astrology, automatic writing, (westerm) Buddhism, channelling, crystals manipulation, feminist spirituality, meditation, naturopathy, numerology, palmistry, Reiki, spiritualism, Tantrism, tarot cards, or urban shamanism.

[13] Ritzer (2000) claims in his book to have related his analysis of modern society or McDonaldisation to Weber's bureaucratisation in terms of the rationalisation of society. He defines McDonaldisation as 'the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the world'.