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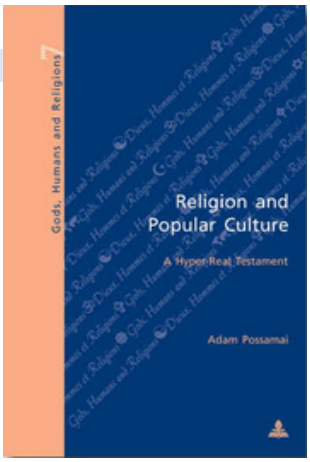
Religion and Popular Culture

A Hyper-Real Testament
Second Printing



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Book synopsis

Popular culture can no longer be exclusively seen as a source of escapism. It can amuse, entertain, instruct, and relax people, but what if it provides inspiration for religion?
The Church of All Worlds, the Church of Satan and Jediism from the *Star Wars* series are but three examples of new religious groups that have been greatly inspired by popular culture to (re)create a religious message. These are hyper-real religions, that is a simulacrum of a religion partly created out of popular culture which provides inspiration for believers/consumers. These postmodern expressions of religion are likely to be consumed and individualised, and thus have more relevance to the self than to a community and/or congregation. On the other hand, religious fundamentalist groups tend, at times, to resist this synergy between popular culture and religion, and at other times, re-appropriate popular culture to promote their own religion. Examples of this re-appropriation are Christian super-hero comics and role playing games, Bible-based PC games, and 'White Metal' music.
To explore these new phenomena, this book views itself as the 'hyper-real testament' of these new religious phenomena by addressing the theories, among many others, of Baudrillard, Jameson and Lipovetsky, and by exploring the use of fictions such as those from *Harry Potter*, *The Matrix*, *Star Trek*, *Buffy* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Contents

Contents: Sociology – Popular Culture – Hyper-Reality – Religion – New Religious Movements – Religious Fundamentalism.

About the author(s)/editor(s)

The Author: Adam Possamai is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Western Sydney. He is also President of the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Vice-President of the Executive Board of RC22 (Research Committee on the Sociology of Religion) from the International Sociological Association, and one of the editors of the *Australian Religion Studies Review*.

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