



## Consumer Culture Gothika

A reading of consumption, markets, & capital as possessed by a system of **ideological processes & fantasies** that conceal its cruelty: the language of ghosts, witches, specters, things that are 'spooky'...

## Paper 02 (empirical) "If You Like Your History Horrible": The Obscene Supplementarity of Thanatourism

- Examining the ideological role that **dark histories** fulfil for consumer culture. Ethnographic fieldwork = we explore thanatourism as a means for **'post-historical' consumer subjects** to conceive of wilder, pre-liberal, more **imaginative** worlds before **capitalist realism** extinguished all alternatives.
- It is not *schadenfreude* that motivates thanatourism (see Korstanje, 2017) but rather a quixotic pining to **escape** that reality.
- Thanatourism functions as an **'obscene supplement'** through *three processes*:



**Managed Metempsychosis**  
Management of 'walking in the footsteps' trails of those being **memorialised** at dark historic sites.



**Governed Grotesquerie**  
Emphasis on the *fearful, degrading, or disgusting* to strip dark histories of **political content**.



**Curated Kitschification**  
Reduction of dark **tragedy** into *souvenirs*, available to buy at museum gift shops & independent retailers.

## Witches & Witchcraft

**Witches** pre-date biblical times, her origins are rooted in *Mesopotamian mythology* (Weber, 2021). No unifying definition or interpretation exists with historians continuing to debate her origins & meanings from early modernity to the present day (Hutton, 2004).

## Paper 03 (empirical) From Magical Thinking to 'Thinking Magically': The Fetishistic Disavowal of Contemporary Witchcraft

#WitchTok  
50 billion + views



The structure of **disavowal** allows us to *complicate & move beyond* **"magical thinking"**, relied upon by **CCT researchers** (e.g. Fernandez & Lastovicka, 2011) = *objectified, material, meaningful* cultural practice leading to transformation & empowerment.

#manifest



## Paper 01 (conceptual) Revenants in The Marketplace: A Hauntology of Retrocorporation

- How modern capitalism is chronically **haunted** by *obstreperous vestiges* of what preceded it yet remains proficient in assimilating all that *returns to challenge it*.
- Market & state administrators' **co-optation** of the primeval witch & her **ideological trappings**.
- Derrida's (2006) *hauntology* in marketing scholarship = emphasize consumer culture's realisation that its 'best times' are behind it...



Early Modernity  
Expropriation

Middle Modernity  
Provokation

Late Modernity  
Calibration

Time is out of joint

## The Role of Archaisms in Post-Historical Consumer Culture

phD by publication

"Modern capitalism hates **anachronisms** unless they can be *monetised*" (Lezard, 2023: 43).



A collective inability to **separate reality from capitalism**; a conflation that ensures the *market-dominant present* becomes the *de facto limit* to our social imaginaries (Fisher, 2009; also Jameson, 2003)

## Cultural Critique

- Mark Fisher (2009; 2014)**: Capitalism's ability to obfuscate & distract from its own **contradictions & consequences**; absorbing all things that seek to challenge it using subjects' **cynicism** to *strengthen* its political phenomenology.
- Jacques Derrida (1996; 2006)**: Onto affective conceptualisation of the haunted status of our capitalist present. Hauntology = all that *is* can only exist against a backdrop of returning *Others*.
- Slavoj Žižek (1997; 2006; 2008)**: Critique of ideology as something above all objective intelligibility as our inescapable reality. Inconsistencies & contradictions within ideology reveals a glimmer of what is real.



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## The Magical, Mystical & Profane...

Against a backdrop of consumers' *disappointment* with contemporary political, economic malaise of the present, how & why do things from *past worlds* find themselves preserving in the contemporary present; how have they been made palatable for extending market-based logics?

## Critical Ethnography

Ethnography with a **political purpose**: "the importance of situating our work within the global economy" (Peñalosa, 1994: 35). Critical ethnography is well attuned to the **'context-of-context'** approach (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011) & is inspired by Van Maanen's (2011) **'critical tales'**.

- 25 In-depth Interviews
- Historiography & *Digital History*
- Participant Observation
- Observational Netnography (Kozinets, 2020)

