

**“IF YOU LIKE YOUR HISTORY HORRIBLE”:
THE OBSCENE SUPPLEMENTARITY OF THANATOURISM**

Sophie James*
James Cronin
Anthony Patterson

**Department of Marketing
Lancaster University Management School**

**Corresponding author: s.james7@lancaster.ac.uk*

IMPORTANT:

**This is a pre-proofed draft of the manuscript
accepted for forthcoming publication in *Annals of Tourism Research*. No
corrections or proofing edits have been made to this draft.**

Please refer to the official and final copyedited version for referencing

“If You Like Your History Horrible”: The Obscene Supplementarity of Thanatourism

Abstract

By examining witch tourism in Lancashire, England, this paper reveals the ideological role that dark histories fulfil for consumer culture. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, we explore thanatourism as a means for ‘post-historical’ subjects to conceive of wilder, pre-liberal worlds before capitalist realism extinguished all alternatives. Nevertheless, because of how history remains subsumed and consumed commercially, thanatourism works to support rather than subvert tacit endorsement of the neoliberal-capitalist present. Using Derrida and Žižek’s theoretical articulations of ‘supplementarity’, we show how thanatourism and its dark historical content is made to function as an ‘obscene supplement’ to the neoliberal-capitalist present through three processes: managed metempsychosis, governed grotesquerie, and curated kitschification. Authenticity within thanatourism remains illusory, but an illusion that nonetheless perpetuates capitalist realism.

Keywords: Capitalist realism, Post-history, Žižek, Derrida, Witch tourism, Thanatourism

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history. I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 18).

History and historical sites continue to feature regularly in global tourism at the putative ‘end of history’. Touristic interest in historical sites that are associated with violence, death, and suffering has grown especially in recent years (Hartmann et al., 2018; Goulding & Pressey, 2023; Stone & Morton, 2022). The increased attention given to ‘dark histories’ coincides with speculation that today’s reigning neoliberal-capitalist hegemony is experiencing “structural sclerosis” (Zwick, 2018, p. 926) characterised by a collective sense of disappointment with the present and near total absence of social, political, or economic alternatives that might bring into relief a less disappointing future (Čaušević, 2019).

While significant political events and changes can and still occur (e.g. the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the Israel-Hamas conflict), today’s subjects of neoliberal capitalism cannot imagine a world that is fundamentally different from the present one. The well-known quip that “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism” (Jameson, 2003, p. 76; also Fisher, 2009) is perfectly reflected by today’s breadth of films, television shows, videogames, and memes that are more likely to depict the destruction of the planet than to portray a future free from versions of capitalism. The negativity of this ‘post-historical’ impasse – or ‘end of history’ – is exacerbated by the increasing financial, environmental, and psychic living costs of an intensely competitive, superficial, and rapacious consumer culture that shows no signs of abating.

In the context of bleak dissatisfaction with capitalist hegemony and intense boredom with the impossibility of change, subjects of ‘post-history’ have nowhere to turn but the past for social speculation and inspiration (Ahlberg, Hietanen, & Soila, 2021). In this paper, we locate touristic interest in dark histories within the broad church of *thana-capitalism*; an economic subsystem of neoliberalism organised to commoditise death and suffering as a source for consumers’ reaffirmation of self and personal privilege (Korstanje, 2017). Thana-capitalism has been assumed to function through a mode of participatory *schadenfreude*; by consuming the miseries of ancestral *Others*, its subjects – ‘thanatourists’ – are narcissistically reassured that they are doing comparatively better within today’s hyper individualistic framework imposed on them by neoliberal values. However, we argue it is not individuals’ willingness to go along with neoliberalism’s imperative for social comparison that motivates thanatourism, but their quixotic pining to *escape* that reality. We explore how thanatourists attempt to offset their boredom at the ‘end of history’ by visiting dark history sites where they can experience wilder, more authentic (albeit illiberal) ways of living that contrast with those of the sclerotic present and, above all, entertain the idea that alternatives are possible.

Boredom has been discussed as “both a consequence of, and as an irritant within post-history, as a potentially destabilising force that threatens to ‘restart’ history” (Daly, 2022, p. 2). Nevertheless, because of how history – with all its brutalities, suffering, and superstitions – is obscenely represented and marketed by thanatourism providers, we explore how post-historical boredom is sated in ways that valorise individualistic consumption, depoliticise the past, and ultimately sustain rather than subvert ‘capitalist realism’. As defined by Fisher (2009), capitalist realism reflects 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, naturalising the consensus, “that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative” (p. 2). We draw upon Jacques Derrida’s and Slavoj Žižek’s writings on “supplementarity” to interpret how thana-tourism works to supplement rather than undermine capitalist realism.

We structure our analysis according to two interrelated questions: 1) how does interest in dark history relate to post-historical boredom? And 2.) how does thanatourism function as an ‘obscene supplement’ to capitalist realism? To address these questions, we draw upon data from an ethnographic study of Lancashire witch tourism in the Northwest of England. Lancashire boasts numerous macabre exhibitions, heritage sites, and retail enterprises that are structured around the brutal persecution of suspected witches in the 17th century, most famously the execution of the ‘Pendle Witches’ in 1612. The Jacobean period that Lancashire’s witch tourism is based upon emphasises a semi-mythic world of political turmoil, superstition, and zealotry coloured by dramatic violence, magical thinking, and rugged agrarian lifestyles far removed from the urbanist, cynically rationalist societies of today. Jacobean society was modernising but not yet overrun by the uniform drudge of secular capitalist realism, presenting thanatourists with fantasies of a very different world than the present.

Our contributions for critical tourism research are two-fold. First, in response to calls to better link tourism with political economy (Dunkley, 2015; Fitchett, Linderg, & Martin, 2021), we deepen conceptual understanding of the ideological role that historic sites fulfil for contemporary consumer culture. Second, we go beyond the schadenfreude thesis of thanatourism by revealing how consumer interest in dark history is motivated by the desire to drop out of neoliberalism’s framework of social competition rather than to perpetuate it.

Although our ethnographic focus on one geographic region in the Northwest of England restricts the external validity of our claims, we outline several recommendations for future researchers to expand our work in the concluding section of this paper.

2.0 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

2.1 Thanatourism & capitalist realism: A speculative note

While fascination with death is as old as human civilisation, the expansion of thanatourism to a commercial scale has only occurred within the last few decades. This is attributable to diversifying leisure economies, global media and communication technologies that heighten consumer awareness of atrocities and disasters, and evolving discourses of hedonic fulfilment (Hartmann et al., 2018; Lynes & Wragg, 2023; Seaton, 1996). Thanatourism is defined as: “travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death” (Seaton, 1996, p. 240). Thanatourism experiences have a pronounced historical aspect and are typically organised around sites significant to tragedies of the past. Dunkley (2015, p. 178) suggests, “thanatourism experiences may appeal to individuals because they promise the chance to ‘travel back in time’ to historically significant death sites that are cemented at the impasse of their most dramatic historical moment”. Rather than providing a dematerialised “telling” of dark history, thanatourism allows for tragedies of the past to be “experienced” by visitors. This is accomplished through interactive support systems mediated by stakeholders

and interest groups (e.g. state and commercial guides, tours, retail, visual and narratological repertoires) that situate thanatourism within a larger economic subsystem, *thana-capitalism* (Korstanje, 2017, 2021).

Korstanje's (2017, p. 67) conceptualisation of thana-capitalism reflects an assumption that "tourism exhibits the main values of society and her economic production". Through thanatourism – which is predicated on the suffering of ancestral *Others* – societal subjects reproduce today's dominant neoliberal-capitalist logic of exploitation. Tragedy and death are made to function as sources of 'value' for personal validation and enjoyment rather than catalysts for societal cohesion or recovery. This process is assumed to hinge on two interrelated cultural and economic conditions. First, tragedy and death are dislocated from communal concerns and isolated for individual consumption, "through the imposition of allegories, dark landscapes and the spectacle of disaster" (Korstanje, 2021, p. 10). Second, a disintegration of social ties is normalised by the intersection of neoliberal-capitalism's narcissist spirit with ruthless self-assertion and a social-Darwinist arch-fantasy to elevate "survival of fittest as a new ethics" (2017, p. 12). From these conditions, an ideological imperative to celebrate personal success at the expense of *Others* is naturalised:

The competition fostered by the ideology of capitalism offers the salvation for few ones, at the expense of the rest... Whenever one of our direct competitors fails, we feel an insane happiness. I argue that a similar mechanism is activated during our visit to dark tourism sites (Korstanje, 2017, p. 67).

Korstanje's thana-capitalist argument reflects the idea that neoliberal-capitalist subjectivity relates to "an expression of other-abasing self-love" and is reified through "a desire to have at the expense of others" (Cluley & Dunne, 2012, p. 253). *Schadenfreude* thus constitutes today's structure of feeling, culminating in what Giroux (2008) calls the neoliberal *theatre of cruelty*. Visiting sites where one can observe the death and suffering of *Others* takes pride of place in this theatre, Korstanje suggests, because it "not only makes us feel special because we are in a race after all, but also reminds us of how special we are" (2017, p. 58).

We do not disagree with Korstanje's reasoning that thanatourism counts as an expressive, life-affirming, and self-aggrandising experience in today's intensely competitive culture, but we perhaps should be critical of the assumption that wilful participation in social-comparison constitutes consumers' default motivation. While Korstanje locates touristic encounters with historic death and suffering as ideologically rooted in "a radical disinterest in the Other, except what is conducive to individual goals" (2017, p.viii), we cannot discount that some thanatourism has been found to engender: social mobilisation to denounce hatred and prejudice against oppressed groups (Soulard et al., 2023); learning and volunteering to develop affective and collective relationships with the past (Driessen, 2022); and moral confirmation of the past ('see it to believe it') which can reinforce a shared identity (Light, 2017; Tinson, Saren & Roth, 2015).

Rather than be motivated cynically by a schadenfreude-esque desire to win against *Others*, thanatourism might alternatively function as an attempt to temporarily *escape* this race altogether, and to revel in foreclosed worlds filled with more authentic and higher stake events than today's petty social competition. Fantasising about pre-industrial pasts where pastoral community, rugged lifestyles, and mysticism had not yet been extinguished by bourgeois pragmatism are sometimes relied upon as compelling escapes from modern life (Belk & Costa, 1998). Visiting sites of historic death and suffering could, by extension, be

read as symptomatic of a collective and tacitly understood impulse for *egress* from today's cynical capitalist realism. "What capitalist realism consolidates," Fisher and Gilbert (2014, p. 90) claim:

is the idea that we are in the era of the post-political – that the big ideological conflicts are over [...] Capitalist realism isn't the direct endorsement of neoliberal doctrine; it's the idea that, whether we like it or not, the world is governed by neoliberal ideas, and that won't change.

By contrasting sharply with today's sclerosed social world, thanatourism with its access to harsher, more dramatic ways of life might be read as allowing for today's *bored* and cynical subjects of post-history and post-politics to engage in a 'back to basics' fantasy: "the unleashing of the barbarian who lurked beneath our apparently civilised, bourgeois society, through the satisfying of the barbarian's 'basic instincts'" (Žižek & Horvat, 2015, p. 107). Importantly, individuals' efforts to pursue these basic instincts does not undermine the neoliberal-capitalist hegemony of the present, because all hegemonies require, as Žižek (1997, p. 90) explains, a minimum of barbarism – a "stain of obscenity" – to legitimise and reproduce themselves.

To better explain how accessing barbarisms of the past works to support rather than subvert capitalist realism, we turn next to the concepts of 'supplementarity' and 'obscene supplement'.

2.2 *The obscene supplement*

Derrida's (1997) logic of supplementarity in *Of Grammatology* suggests that a supplement (*supplément*) acts as an addition to, or a replacement of, another entity. The Derridean supplement operates on two levels. First, as that which adds to and enriches: "a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude" (p. 144). Second, as a substitute where an inadequacy or emptiness exists and thus needs to be filled or replaced: "the supplement... adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void" (Derrida, 1997, p. 145). With its potential to replace, supplementarity can be deemed threatening: "the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place [tient-lieu]*" (Derrida, 1997, p. 145).

Viewing thanatourism through the lens of supplementarity allows us to see that by seeking out the barbaric, illiberal histories of ancestral *Others* for consumption, a regressive attempt is being made to fill what is perceived to be absent today. Given that neoliberalism's global hegemony has supplanted all other visions of 'the good life', including those once upheld by traditional religions, cultures, and communities, thanatourism might reasonably be assumed to fill that void. However, seeking out aspects of the past to fill perceived absences in the post-historical and post-political present risks threatening the dogmatic ethos of capitalist realism – the thinking that not only are the neoliberal-capitalist values we live under the best and most complete, but there are no conceivable alternatives (Fisher, 2009).

For Žižek however, the Derridean supplement should not be thought of as something which threateningly substitutes or replaces. Rather, supplementarity can also function as an "obscene" underside which is contradictory yet integrative, such as that which allows subjects

to disavow the dominant symbolic tradition while also perpetuating it. An important aspect in Žižek's articulation of supplementarity is 'fantasy', which informs how we narrativise our social reality to shield us from its insuperable deadlocks and contradictions. Fantasy acts as a form of "non-acknowledged obscene support" (1997, p. 81) which makes the traumatic antagonisms of a symbolic tradition's official ideologico-ethical prescriptions not only bearable, but sometimes even *desirable*.

To explain, Žižek provides the example of American soldiers' torture of inmates at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and other related injustices committed under the guise of defending liberty and civility. Such murky events are symbolically incompatible with neoliberalism's official ideologico-ethical prescriptions of tolerance and freedom but, with the addition of some shared fantasy, become tacitly accepted as their necessary complement: "the true Other of liberal democracy is not its fundamentalist enemy, but *its own disavowed underside, its own obscene supplement*" (Žižek, 2006a, p. 365). Insofar as neoliberalism outwardly prescribes humanist, egalitarian values, then some illiberal acts (such as spirited violence against those who oppose these values) can be fantasmatically condoned as "the heroic attitude of 'Somebody has to do the dirty work, so let's do it!'" or permitted as "the dirty obscene underside of Power" (Žižek, 2002, p. 30). Articulated differently, Žižek (2008a, p. 58) clarifies:

One becomes a full member of a community not simply by identifying with its explicit symbolic tradition, but only when one also assumes the spectral dimension that sustains this tradition, the undead ghosts that haunt the living, the secret history of traumatic fantasies transmitted 'between the lines,' through the lacks and distortions of the explicit symbolic tradition.

Here, what binds a community together is not *following* the explicit symbolic tradition to the letter of the law, but rather in knowing which of its 'laws' to break and how these might be condoned. The tacit expectation that a community's members indulge in certain violations or transgressions serves an obscene, *superegoic* function by "exerting strong pressure on the individual to comply with its mandate of group identification" (Žižek, 2006b, p. 63). Like the psychoanalytic notion of a superego that works under the surface to regulate an individual's behaviour, there is an underside of a community's explicit rules or values that helps to support cohesion between its members. One need only think of how the soldiers in Žižek's Abu Ghraib example likely reaffirmed their status as a closed community through participating in ritualistic abuse of their prisoners thus producing for themselves a kind of "solidarity-in-guilt" (2006b, p. 64).

Applying Žižek's interpretation of supplementarity to thanatourism, we might assume that visiting dark history sites to experience the ghosts of a barbarous, violent world prior to neoliberal-capitalist democracy does not threaten but actually sustains faith in our current political ideology: "far from undermining the [function of ideology], its 'transgression' in fact serves as its ultimate support [...] if ideology is to maintain its hold on us, we must experience ourselves as not fully in its grasp" (Žižek, 1997, p. 99). One might only become fully committed to the values of the civilised present not by following them blindly, but by exposing oneself to pre-liberal obscenities that were undertaken in the absence of those values.

In subsequent sections we explore dark history sites as part of an obscene supplementarity that diverts attention from – or *takes-the-place-of* – the contemporary

shortcomings of neoliberalism. In this way, thanatourism integrates neoliberal-capitalism's discordant cultural predecessors to promote the impression that all threats to civilisation have been overcome and superseded by the relative freedom and civility of today's post-historical era. We first provide a background to our empirical context and methods.

3.0 STUDY AREA & METHODS

The empirical work for this paper was gathered as part of a larger study of witchcraft's relationship with consumer culture. This paper presents results from an ethnographic component undertaken amongst participants and enclaves of Lancashire witch tourism. Lancashire is a county in Northwest England with historical attachments to witchcraft persecution in the pre-liberal early modern period (Hartmann et al., 2018). Touristic interest is specifically structured around the 17th century trial of twelve accused witches from Pendle Hill, an isolated region in the Pennines caricatured as a place "fabled for theft, violence and sexual laxity" (Hasted, 1993, p. 5). The 1612 'Pendle Witch' trials resulted in the hanging of eight women and two men. Accusations of child murder and cannibalism were also made against a group of women referred to as the "Samlesbury Witches", adding to perceptions of Jacobean Lancashire as particularly wild, transgressive, and far removed from civilised, bourgeois life (Hasted, 1993).

Today, Lancashire is recognised for touristic attractions that tell (and sell) accounts of the Pendle Witches' executions and broader semi-mythic tales of witchcraft-related death and violence. Marketised servicescapes include heritage centres, walking and road trails, guided tours, commemorative plaques, and numerous shops and pubs decorated with a myriad of "witchy" signage and tchotchkes. Besides opportunities for thanatourists to experience a fantastic return to the primitive through commercial artefacts and consumptionscapes, much of Lancashire's natural environment presents a pastoral reversal of modern industrialism and urbanism. Pendle Hill and its surrounding landscape is a sparse, severe, and windswept place of almost biblical wilderness. Views from the hill's blustery peak reveal a panoramic expanse of grass and stone spilling to the horizon in all directions, belying the world of industry and commerce beyond it.

Ethnographic immersion in Lancashire witch tourism was undertaken by the first author using principles of participant observation, commencing in February 2022 and concluding in June 2023. The fieldwork involved: visiting and revisiting historic sites, gift shops, and museums; participating in walking tours; reading and collecting brochures; and speaking with other tourists.

To support offline observations, we analysed reviews of Lancashire witch-related attractions on TripAdvisor, a site that has been previously utilised for studying tourism at sites of death and disaster (Sun & LV, 2021). TripAdvisor is an important venue for diverse individuals to connect, interact, and formulate shared discourse about their tourism-related experiences, allowing for a melting-pot of organic and spontaneous expression (Milazzo & Santos, 2022). TripAdvisor is classifiable under public sites and data (Kozinets, 2020, p. 197) meaning all reviews posted to the website are "open to any browser" and "does not require registration and a log on with a password" to be accessed.

Following principles of observational netnography (Kozinets, 2020), review pages for local witch-related sites were identified for investigative filtering, including Lancaster Castle, Pendle Hill, witchcraft stores, walking tours, and heritage centres. First, all reviews posted for each attraction were read in their entirety, providing us with a broad cultural understanding of tourism in the region, followed by a process of filtering posts specifically related to witches, death, and dark history. Using evolving search chains including keywords and Boolean operators, we subsequently narrowed and explored *within* the reviews, seeking out relevant and rich data relating to our research questions. To safeguard posters' anonymity, usernames are not disclosed in this paper.

From December 2022 to May 2023, the first author conducted semi-structured interviews to complement offline and online observations. Initially, as part of the larger study of witches and consumer culture, the first author spoke with individuals who self-identify as witches, using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods facilitated by distributing recruitment posters in the local area. To encompass a broader pool of participants for the tourism sub-project, the snowball sample was expanded with more flexible criteria. We sought adults who visited a witch tourism site in Lancashire and were open to share their experiences. For this paper, we draw upon a mixed sample of 22 interviews that include diverse voices from general tourists to those more invested in witches as an identity category.

The first author acknowledges the potential positive bias of her "female fieldwork experience" when collecting data (Manfreda, Ye & Nelson-Miles, 2023, p. 2). Feminine traits (e.g., empathy, supportiveness, approachability) may have helped her to navigate entry and build rapport amongst participants within the female-oriented and 'herstorically' located spaces of witch interest. Although she had no personal investment in witch-related cultures or witch tourism before undertaking the research, she remained empathetic and reflexive about how some participants may frame their experiences in ways that do not conform to secularist, empiricist research assumptions (Ozanne & Appau, 2019). To ensure impartiality in handling dark history materials relating to gendered violence and misogyny, the first author met periodically with the wider research team to share impressions and subject emerging interpretations to scrutiny.

All interviews were undertaken either in-person or by video-calling software, recorded with each participant's informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and pseudonymised. Where possible, follow-up interviews were arranged to explore emerging ideas and confirm our interpretations.

Observations, interviews, and netnographic data were brought together as a combined data pool for analysis. Our analytic procedures adhered to "the hermeneutical back and forth between part and whole" approach: drawing out patterns, making connections, and comparing emerging interpretations against one another and in reference to conceptual connections from the literature (Spiggle, 1994, p. 495). This method enabled us to extract provisional categories which were gradually developed into core themes using Žižek's and Derrida's articulations of supplementarity. Whilst supplementarity provided us with the overall theoretical and explanatory framework for approaching our analysis, the recursive process necessitated moving between the empirical material and the wider academic literature, seeking out additional concepts to support emerging interpretations. This involved consulting the literature on superstition and supernatural activity, (e.g., Holloway, 2010), kitsch (e.g. Potts, 2012), and other key constructs (e.g., the grotesque; see Bakhtin, 1984). Gradually, this process allowed us to crystallise three theory-enfolded themes which explain the interlinking

ways through which Lancashire witch tourism supports (rather than subverts) capitalist realism.

4.0 AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF LANCASHIRE WITCH TOURISM

We present our findings across three themes. First, we discuss how *metempsychosis*, an empathetic activity undertaken by visitors at witch tourism sites, is managed to be self-fulfilling rather than politically subversive. Second, we report on the emphasis of *grotesquery* at these sites as a way of denuding dark histories of political content and insulating aspects of the present from critique. Third, we explore how *kitschification* is undertaken to soften, ironise, and reduce brutalities of the past to a commodifiable, inoffensive aesthetic. Collectively, these themes reveal how dark history can be carefully dissociated from any reverberating dissidence in the present, thus supplementing rather than subverting today's ideologico-ethical prescriptions.

4.1 *Managed metempsychosis*

A prominent theme in our data relates to tourism providers' careful management of 'metempsychosis' to ensure that visitor experiences remain centred on the enjoyable consumption *of*, rather than active justice-seeking *for*, the ancestral *Other*. Metempsychosis manifests in tourism as a 'recreated journey', where visitors follow in the footsteps of, and try to identify with, those being memorialised at historic sites (Laing & Crouch, 2011). Accordingly, metempsychotic identification at locations where mostly women were murdered for witchcraft can reasonably be suspected of presenting a probable risk of reawakening old resentments, stoking gender and class politics, and inciting militant anger in the present. To militate against fuelling the possibility of over-identification and politicised disharmony that might "restart" history (Daly, 2022), much of the commercial witch tourism we observed in Lancashire is organised to ensure that commemoration of the executed women is grounded to individual, depoliticised consumption experiences rather than collective dissatisfactions with structural injustices that might persist today. Commemoration is encouraged so long as it is 'enjoyable' and one's enjoyment does not disrupt the present symbolic order: "Everything is permitted, you can enjoy everything, *but* deprived of the substance that makes it dangerous" (Žižek, 2004, p. 507).

One way that metempsychosis is defanged, de-structuralised, and made enjoyable at witch tourism sites is by locating visitors' consumption within the realm of "supernatural possibility" (Holloway, 2010). Lancashire is replete with ghost-hunting activities, legend-telling, and witchcraft mythology which supplants historical reality with entertainment and replaces structures with affects. Recounting the attraction of supernatural possibility, Emerson (41), a self-identifying Pagan witch who works as a guide and actor for a museum service spanning multiple sites in the local area, emphasised: "*they [tourists] absolutely love it [supernatural pursuits], by far what I get asked about the most at these historic locations*", and; "*people have paid hundreds of pounds to stay at the Judges' Lodgings looking for ghosts*".

To explore the consumer appeal of supernatural possibility, the first author took part in a commercial ghost walk that retraces the Pendle Witches' steps from their trial at Lancaster Castle to their execution on Gallows Hill, visiting supposedly haunted locations in-between. As a form of "haunted space commodification" (Goldstein, 2007, p. 174), ghost walks ground

tourism in ludic, performative engagements with the ‘uncanny’ rather than in any kind of empirical engagement with political, potentially offensive themes such as misogyny, male violence against women, or the continued persecution of marginalised individuals. To render metempsychosis conducive to consumer interests of the self, the ghost tour included a séance within a wooded area where the cadavers of the Pendle Witches were rumoured to have been discarded and left unburied following their execution. During the ghost walk, the guide told comedic anecdotes, punctuating historical facts with folk tales, hearsay, and jokes, and reminding walkers to “share their spooky experiences to Facebook!”.

Similarly, a visitor discloses to TripAdvisor the touristic emphasis on supernatural possibility and play at Lancaster Castle where the Pendle Witches were incarcerated and sentenced to death:

They even staged a mock witch trial. Lots of ghosts and ghouls jumping out at us as we went round which added to the fun... although it had elements of a ‘scare attraction’ the tour was based on historical facts. Lots of old tales and ghost stories.

Courting supernatural possibility works to temper thana-tourists’ metempsychotic journeys and shore up capitalist realism in the present by producing an “aetheric fantasy-space in which reality is irretrievably lost” (Žižek, 2006a, p. 152). By performatively repackaging the obscenities of the past in ways that avoid the stickiness of historical accuracy and political realities, tourism providers rely on “infrastructures of enchantment” defined by Holloway (2010, p. 618), as “affective assemblages of supposition and wonder that momentarily transform space into something charged with the strange and anomalous”.

“Elyana”, a self-professed Anglophile who relocated from Latin America to Lancashire describes the *leavening* effect of supernatural possibility in thanatourism. Having previously visited other dark tourism attractions she found to be less about enchantment or fantasy making, including favelas in her native Brazil, Elyana suggests supernatural possibility at places of death works to bring levity to the visitor experience:

...I do think that [supernatural possibility]’s interesting and it’s fun, in a way, also to think of an extra element to life: or an extra world beyond life; beyond this sort of ‘muggle’ reality that we live in... we are trying to look for something that makes this life more bearable... I think that those stories – or trying to connect with ‘something else’, something more magical – helps (Elyana).

Rather than subvert faith in today’s rational neoliberal environment, or what Elyana calls “this ‘muggle’ present”, supernatural possibility affords her a way to overcome post-historical boredom by adding “an extra layer to existence”. Her choice of the word “muggle” is notable as it is a term borrowed from the *Harry Potter* series of children’s fantasy books that references the *non*-magical and reflects Elyana’s interest in seeking out a supplement to make today’s cynical-rational world “more bearable”.

Another way that metempsychosis is depoliticised, consumerised, and made useful for supplementing capitalist realism is through ensuring ‘pilgrimages’ are perceived as opportunities for consumer accumulation rather than justice-seeking for ancestral victims. Many of the walking routes, trails, and sites of historical importance appeal to an ethos of the self. One of the major pilgrimages, “The Lancashire Witches Walk”, a 51-mile self-guided walking trail which begins in Pendle and ends at Gallows Hill in Lancaster, is punctuated with accumulative activities. While pilgrims are encouraged to metempsychotically retrace the

steps undertaken by the Pendle Witches prior to their execution, the walk is well provisioned with witch-themed market offerings along the way including a heritage centre, gift shops, cafes, and pubs. This is reflected by TripAdvisor reviews, such as, “*We was doing the witches trial and before we started we decided to visit the witches galore shop and was impressed by all the products*”, and: “*Went to Pendle for a witch hunt. Started our journey at the lovely cafe in the village. Great food and drink and prices very good.*”

As a further accumulative component, The Lancashire Witches Walk is marked by ten iron way markers each engraved with a verse from a commemorative poem, inviting pilgrims to take rubbings at each marker with pencil and paper to collect. Rather than acting as a catalyst to provoke collective reflection on injustices inflicted on ancestral *Others*, walking trails are described by visitors on TripAdvisor as an opportunity for personal fulfilment and pleasure. One tourist writes:

I have always wanted to visit Pendle Hill with all its haunting history and commanding presence. An avid hiker and witch fan my friend and I hiked to the summit while on a witchy weekend in Pendle... The summit has a monument ... perfect for that “we did it” selfie.

Although metempsychotic journeys can grant visitors access to genuine feelings of empathy for memorialised victims and thus have the potential to engender very real effects on the present, these feelings are, as our above observations illustrate, rerouted into consumer symbolism, personal enjoyment, and opportunities to collect consumable keepsakes. Educating oneself *of* the past and entertaining oneself *with* the past become the obscene underside of one another in post-history – they are mutually supplemental and co-constituting. By inviting thanatourists to reflect on their own emotions, experiences, and identities rather than on politics or injustices, Lancashire witch tourism neatly supplements rather than subverts today’s capitalist present in which individualism and consumerism are massively naturalised.

4.2 Governed grotesquery

The second theme to emerge from our data relates to the subordination of the memorialised dead’s legacy to ‘grotesquery’, defined by content elements that are fearful, degrading, or disgusting. The grotesque aspects of an experience are those characterised by an anti-structural ethos in which “the *id* is uncrowned and transformed into a ‘funny monster’” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 49). In playing up to the comic and the horrific when narrating the history of slain witches, tourism providers give primacy to the perverse pleasures and curiosities of the individual consumer. Rather than appeal to more politically articulate concerns of the collective, the grotesque caters to “a disposition that is overall both tasteless and morbid... getting the shit scared out of you – and loving it; an exchange mediated by adrenalin” (Brophy, 1986, p. 5).

This orientation towards affects rather than politics supplements rather than contradicts the post-historical ethos in the present, allowing Jacobean bigotry, superstition, and violence – despite their apparent ethical distance from today’s neoliberal humanist ideology – to function as its obscene underside. The prospect of grotesquery is even allowed to become a factor in routine consumer decision-making. One visitor describes his motivation for visiting Lancaster Castle on TripAdvisor as the following: “*My missus likes the occult and*

I enjoy castles, so this was the perfect place to go to as its [sic] got a history in [sic] hanging witches in England's horrible history”.

What this visitor calls “horrible history” encompasses obscene retrospections that offer temporary, enclaved reversals of the present’s neoliberal-humanist norms and a revival of the horrors that had been repressed out of bourgeois consciousness. Because these horrors are contained to ‘legitimate’ heritage sites, they are protected by a degree of fantasy-support allowing visitors to indulge their obscene-perverse desires without feeling that they have compromised any of today’s ideologico-ethical prescriptions of tolerance and freedom. As Žižek (2006b, p. 28) suggests, “[a]s numerous analyses from Bakhtin onward have shown, periodic transgressions are inherent to the social order; they function as a condition of the latter's stability”.

Throughout the ethnography, grotesquery featured heavily in tourism providers’ emphasis on a carceral aesthetic of suffering. The dehumanising conditions of the Pendle Witches’ incarceration and execution were most apparent throughout tours of Lancaster Castle, with guides drawing reference to shackles, torture equipment, and chained masks – “scold's bridles” – that were used on female inmates to prevent them from talking to one another. In reference to the Castle tours, TripAdvisor posts report that: “*‘Witches’ were tried and executed here; the place is full of examples of just how unpleasant one human being can be to another*”; “*The tour includes... prison cells, instruments of restraint, details of hangings and the Pendle Witches. This is not for the faint hearted; it is dark but fascinating*”, and; “*If you like your history horrible, then well worth a visit*”. Contrary to neoliberalism’s official privileging of civility, inclusiveness, and dignity, the focus in much of the Castle tour centres “not in the bourgeois ego” but on “degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 19).

The Žižekian mode of supplementarity is visible in carceral images of degradation which carry out further violence against historic victims under the aegis of remembrance and education. Rather than explore the political and judiciary biases that might continue into the neoliberal present (thus destabilising faith *in* the present), a surplus of attention and voyeuristic fascination is given to the Pendle Witches’ murders, down to the specific hanging methods used by executioners to maximise their suffering. Careful attention is given by the Lancaster Castle tour guides to the notorious dungeon in the Well Tower – or ‘the Pit’ – where the witches endured months of confinement under harsh conditions, succumbing to disease and despair before facing their grim fate. A TripAdvisor user remarks: “*You can actually see the cell where the Pendle Witches waited months for their trial and the window they were pushed out of with nooses round there [sic] necks*”. The surplus of male-on-female violence depicted “provokes us in our innermost being, stirring up automatic sympathy with the ultimate archetypal image of the victimised woman”, Žižek (2008b, p. 13) suggests, however there is also at play, “the lie of this sympathy, the obscene pleasure we gain from seeing the victim suffer”.

Although confronting visitors with obscene details of the brutal mistreatment of women would ordinarily incur disgust within most venues of the civilised neoliberal present, it is nevertheless granted license within the thanatourism context. The deaths of ancestral *Others* are recast “not of actual social history with its sober facts and figures, but of a deliberately grotesque and exaggerated account of the past” (Inglis & Holmes, 2003, p. 59).

“Rose”, a higher education teacher with interest in Lancaster’s dark history, describes how learning about the gruesome ways women were silenced in the Jacobean age provoked in

her disgust and alarm, but also granted perspective on the improved status of women today. Rose is well-aware that women remain unequal and objectified in many contemporary environments. However, having been confronted at Lancaster Castle with grotesque carceral details of how society's most vulnerable were mistreated throughout pre-liberal history, Rose finds herself willing to disavow many of the injustices that persist in the capitalist present:

... they [tour guides] talked about making a mark on somebody if they were being convicted... obviously we don't do things like that and now. You do think, 'oh gosh, that's a bit gruesome'... I feel thankful that as a society we've changed. And perhaps appreciative of what we have... when you look at stories like the Pendle witches, you think that is a context in time *but* a portrayal of what *happened* to women. (Rose).

Grotesquery is dramatically invoked to emphasise “the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 48). By immersing visitors in the otherworldly barbarism of an illiberal past, an enclave is set up for bounded play removed from the safe humanist present, while working epistemically and ideologically to reinforce the capitalist realist fantasy that things are indeed truly ‘better’ under neoliberalism. Similarly, “Elyana” explains that while the pressures of today's individualist competition sometimes frustrate her and make her pine for more pastoral, primitive ways of living, Lancashire heritage sites give her pause:

...[visiting these sites] is almost like a reminding exercise how far things have come. So, it's hard to get today to be great or perfect, but we've definitely come a long way from basically being barbarians and, you know, in a way we are grateful for that... I think we do have more guarantees [today], a little bit more assurance that we are protected from these things (Elyana).

For Rose and Elyana, while thanatourism caters to visitors' curiosities about – or even beliefs in – alternative possibilities, the barbarism they are confronted with ensures that they do not take their beliefs too seriously. As Fisher (2009, p. 5) suggests of capitalist realism, “[i]n claiming... to have ‘delivered us from the “fatal abstractions” inspired by the “ideologies of the past”’, it “presents itself as a shield protecting us from the perils posed by belief itself”. By revealing to visitors some of the perils that can emerge from over-identifying with pre-liberal ways of life, witch tourism distracts from contemporary cruelties that persist today.

4.3 Curated kitschification

A third way that witch tourism is made to function as an obscene supplement to capitalist realism is through market actors' enrolment of “kitschy aestheticization” from which the gravitas of real tragedy is “reduced to a thrilling sensation, its truth-claim is suspended” (Žižek, 1997, p. 252). Exemplified by an expansive range of witchcraft-themed pens, fridge magnets, keyrings, mugs, postcards, tote bags, t-shirts, jewellery, dolls, plush toys, souvenirs, and tchotchkes available to buy at museum gift shops and independent retailers, sentimental kitsch is relied upon to diffuse the austere and soften the atrocities of bigotry and male-led systems of exploitation. Kitsch is characterised by an excess of garishness or gaiety and likened to a “folding screen to curtain off death” (Kundera, 1985, p. 253). Though kitsch has been approached as commodification that produces a cheap or insouciant reinterpretation of events for easy consumption (Sharpley & Stone, 2009), we observed that kitsch also works ideologically to insulate today's cultural-political landscape from critique.

“Quirky” is a term frequently used by visitors as a euphemism for kitsch in the context of Lancashire witch tourism sites and retail spaces, exemplified by statements on TripAdvisor such as: “*Really nice quirky shop filled with lots of souvenirs and knick knacks. Bought a beautiful Pendle witch and some cute owls*”; “*Lots of quirky things to get, magnets, tea towels, witches on brooms*”, and; “*Small heritage centre, gift shop with some quirky items*”.

A miscellany of “quirky” bric-a-brac marketed in the spirit of detoxifying, satirising, and commodifying once controversial, discriminatory symbols were observed across sites, such as merchandise featuring witch woodcuts. In early modernity, witch woodcuts were crudely printed illustrations used in pamphlets distributed throughout Europe to promote suspicion towards “unruly” women and to foment the criminalisation of witchcraft. In their updated kitschy form, satirising text is placed beneath reprints of woodcuts, such as a postcard featuring two witches with a ‘pet’ demon alongside the text ‘#Relationship Goals’ and a tote bag emblazoned with a woodcut of witches celebrating their Sabbath with the text ‘Hex, drugs & mind control’. Distilling historic injustices through kitsch denudes dark histories of their complex origins and gender politics, salvaging for visitors “feelings of comfort, safety and hope” (Sharpley & Stone, 2009, p. 127).

Much of the reliance on kitsch we observed aligns with the “teddy-bearification” of suffering (Potts, 2012), characterised by repackaging historical tragedy to assist in the perpetuation of *consumerised* subjectivities rather than reawakening political agency. Teddy-bearifying the past works by “screening out political realities” (Potts, 2012, p. 234) and promoting in their place “sentimental artefacts and symbols” (p. 235). For instance, through dolls modelled on those who were executed in 1612 being sold at a shop in Pendle, historic victims are unmoored from the political gravitas of their mistreatment and made into mascots for individualist fantasy-making and sensation-seeking.

By relying upon kitsch to supplant structural problems related to class and gender and the fallibility of witness depositions that persist under neoliberal-capitalism today, thanatourism reduces potentially polemic issues to decorative items that are less likely to arouse anxiety or invite political attention. Commodity culture becomes an important part of the tourism experience, or as one TripAdvisor tourist recommends:

If you’re in the trail of the witches in Pendle, you can’t really pass by this little shop without having a look...The shop sells witch-related gifts and collectables, including Pendle Hill souvenirs, local interest books and has a selection of witchcraft products.

This is not to say that visitors uncritically *accept* commercial influence at sites of death, but being able to cynically distance themselves from the commercialisation of victims’ suffering while still revelling in its treats provides visitors with a pragmatic means for making their experience enjoyable. Cheap, mass-produced tchotchkes are allowed to take on value more than their material worth and thus serve as a Žižekian *fetish* wherein, “the fetish [is] an illusion obfuscating the true state of things” (Žižek, 2008b, p. 299).

“Apollo”, a Greek marketing executive who moved from London to Lancaster to work remotely after the COVID-19 lockdown measures were lifted, spoke to us about the fetishistic nature of the witch souvenirs he owns. The women’s cruel imprisonment, he felt, reflected his personal experiences of alienation and confinement in London during the lockdown. Apollo described purchasing a “Pendle Witch County” fridge magnet and a plush witch doll from the Judges’ Lodgings Museum gift shop as keepsakes. The kitschy nature of these items, for

Apollo, obfuscate – and allow him to disavow – the genuine horrors that the real women experienced:

I wanted to get something to be reminded of this experience I had, and I think ‘what’s the best way to do this?’ It’s getting a souvenir... for example the witch dolls... cute little dolls, soft and squishy... that generic stereotypical witch that you would probably imagine how a “witch” would look [...] every time I walk by my fridge I can see that witch magnet I got from my visit [too]... immediately I’m thinking about the witches, the trip that I had, the stories that I heard ... it's not necessarily, you know, all the bad things that happened to those witches. Its more related to *myself*, the experiences that *I* had [at that time], the interactions that *I* had on the guided tour... not necessarily all the historic things that have happened there which, I know, they are quite dark and not always easy to digest (Apollo).

Such purchases allow visitors to retain memories of the witches while curtaining off their more traumatic aspects. Apollo’s fridge magnet reflects what Žižek (2008b) would classify as a “a tiny stupid object to which [he] cling[s]” (p. 298), a fetishistic means to get close to historical injustices “without paying the full price for it” (p. 300).

Though visitors become well aware that the Jacobean witch-hunt period was punctuated with rampant misogyny, state-sponsored violence, and religious bigotry, fetishes such as witch-themed dolls, magnets, jewellery, homeware, and other material accessories allow them to look past these hard truths and hold onto their fantasies of the era being more wondrous, raucous, and beguiling than today’s post-historical and staid social climate, *without* needing to identify too closely with it.

5.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Using Lancashire witch tourism as our empirical context, we investigated how thanatourism functions as a response to post-historical boredom, providing visitors with a means of accessing an ostensibly more authentic, more eventful world before the cynical realism of neoliberal-capitalism erased all conceivable alternatives. In our findings, we illustrated how thanatourism is entwined complexly with the current cultural impasse: the feeling of bored resignation to a depoliticised, liberalised present shorn of all mysticism and anything outside of money, markets, or consumption.

Thanatourism is staged as an illusory means of transportation to a time where more exciting, dramatic, and oftentimes brutal events once occurred and life as we know it had not yet been remoulded according to reason, industry, and civility. Beyond thanatourism functioning as an enclaved, transgressive ‘way out’ from the suffocating rationalism and commercialism of neoliberal day-to-day life, we argue that such egress is inherent in the present social order, and that the fantasy of escape is a necessary supplemental condition of the order’s stability. Our themes reveal that thanatourism functions as an obscene supplement to capitalist realism through processes of: 1.) aligning visitors’ metempsychotic journeys with consumption rather than politics; 2.) confronting visitors with grotesquery to ensure their fantasies are not taken too seriously, and 3.) providing visitors with enough kitsch to curtain off the traumas that reside in the past and potentially persist today. Our work offers two key contributions for tourism research.

First, our analysis responds to calls for more critical consideration of the interrelationships between tourism and political economy (Dunkley, 2015; Fitchett et al., 2021). In a note for *Annals of Tourism Research*, Dunkley (2015) called for researchers to rethink thanatourism's relationship with societal conditions and to place a greater focus on the implications that memorialising tragic historical moments have for the present. Elsewhere, Light (2017) lamented that, "[m]any researchers have approached dark tourism or thanatourism from a rather narrow perspective which neglects the broader social and political context in which they are situated" (p. 283). Thanatourism studies have remained predominantly epistemologically centred on lived experiences rather than on the structuring influences of market and social systems. Accordingly, travel to sites associated with death and suffering has been assumed to be motivated by individual tourists' personal desires to learn (Driessen, 2022), enhance feelings of some kind of collective identity (Tinson et al., 2015), revel in "ghoulish titillation" (Wilson, 2008, p. 169), or satisfy schadenfreude-esque urges (Dale & Robinson, 2011).

Whilst we do not disregard the importance of individually and experientially based perspectives, approaching thanatourism with an exclusively 'grounded' emphasis on the personal motivations of consumer-tourists can narrow our appreciation of the relationships that thanatourism has with its broader surrounds, thus neglecting the 'unseen' structural influences of a historical or cultural character. Although some theorists have compellingly linked aspects of thanatourism to structural patterning, such as how thanatourists' voyeuristic schadenfreude is normalised and institutionalised by a culture of cynical, competitive neoliberalism that fosters thana-capitalism (e.g. Korstanje, 2017; Tzanelli, 2016), we have made important adjustments to this perspective by inscribing tourists' personal experiences within the ideological preconditions of market-mediated post-political and post-historical systems. We urge future researchers to follow suit in expanding epistemological accounts of thanatourism by seeking a 'calibrated' perspective; one that integrates the phenomenology of tourists' lived experiences with appreciation of the wider structural, contextual conditions that cannot be so easily reflected upon.

Second and relatedly, in our efforts to adopt a calibrated perspective, we complicate and invert the structural functioning of thanatourism. Drawing upon the logic of obscene supplementarity, we considered how thanatourism can be underpinned by a superegoic imperative to offset collective boredom with the sclerotic present or, more accurately, to leave the quiet comforts of post-history behind for the superstitious and brutal obscenities of history. Contrary to Korstanje's assumption that thanatourism produces and is produced by capitalism's injunction to reaffirm personal success through observing the miseries of ancestral *Others*, we propose that thanatourism is more likely linked to an obscene superegoic pressure to transcend (or transgress) these petty injunctions and the limits they place on our freedom while nonetheless sustaining their appearance.

Rather than suggest consumer interest in places associated with death reflects an encultured "sadist obsession for enjoying 'the Other's pain'" (Korstanje, 2017, p. 15), we propose thanatourism may be better thought of as a fantasy-attempt to revisit a world before today's hypercompetitive, cynical conditions normalised obsessive hyper-competitiveness. While for Korstanje, consumers brazenly use thanatourism sites to *opt-in* to a game of neoliberal competition, we identify these sites as appealing epistemically to an unsaid urge to *drop out* of neoliberal competition altogether. However, because commercial thanatourism sites remain aligned with consumer interests of the self rather than with structural and collective politics, dropping out remains illusory. Thanatourism thus perpetuates rather than

obviates post-historical sclerosis by catering to consumers' quixotic desires to experience something different while at the same time, foreclosing any alternatives.

By revealing how thanatourism provides only temporary access to wilder cultural predecessors and does little more for contemporary social imaginaries than confirm neoliberalism's supremacy, we help to clarify and expand Fitchett et al.'s (2021, p. 9) statement that "tourism is a sector in which capitalism conceals its contradictions". Although others have considered how aspects of the sector, such as responsible or eco-tourism, allows for capitalism to sustain itself *in the face of* inherent contradictions (Fletcher, 2011), we have shown how thanatourism appears to function *through* contradictions. In thanatourism, history is invoked paradoxically to defend the post-historical present. As an obscene supplement, thanatourism is something that appears to remedy a lack or fill an absence but works ideologically to obscure the problems of the neoliberal-capitalist present and insulate its social order from critique.

Moreover, while thanatourism is similar to eco-tourism in the sense that both locate discourses and practices – including those on ethics and morality – within the realm of consumption, one works progressively and the other regressively. Rather than appear as a progressive 'fix' in the face of problems associated with mass consumerism, as eco-tourism does, thanatourism works regressively to conceal the (living) antagonisms of the present, functioning to distract from the many legitimate criticisms to be made against our contemporary "civilised" political economy. In these respects, while eco-tourism is presented as an alternative form of development that might overcome some of the problems of a neoliberal capitalist present, thanatourism works in the service of ossifying the present by confronting visitors with the horrors of a world *before* taken-for-granted comforts and rights were afforded to them by capitalism.

"The power of capitalist realism", Fisher (2009, p. 4) explains, "derives in part from the way that capitalism subsumes and consumes all of previous history". Put differently, thanatourism reflects a kind of "cultural necrophilia" (Ahlberg et al., 2021, p. 164) which sees historic events, objects, people, and places resurrected and remarketed in ways that benefit and legitimise the post-historical, post-political present. Our accounts of this process, however, were restricted geographically to the Northwest of England and therefore bound by Anglo-cultural and historical idiosyncrasies that may not translate to other contexts of witch tourism. Our interpretations may be extended or problematised by comparing with destinations such as Salem in the U.S, renowned for its advanced commercialism, or the Fête du Vodoun festival in Benin where witchcraft remains a living and participative affair. These locations among others could offer valuable insight to how thanatourism relates to and differs from neoliberal political economy across borders while enhancing the external validity of the claims made in this paper.

Furthermore, whilst we have explored how depoliticisation is perpetuated through the de-realising effects of visitors thinking about witches, ghosts, magic and so forth, future researchers must ask if the political hollowing out of the visitor experience is obtainable to the same extent in other thanatouristic formations. Contexts beyond witch tourism that function as obscene supplementation for capitalist realism may include 20th century concentration camps (Goulding & Pressey, 2023). Although concentration camps are not underpinned by magical fantasy or superstition, they still present a gateway to an illiberal, alternative world marked out by death, drama, and brutal imaginaries. Auschwitz as a symbol of Nazi terror has long been used to memorialise the perils posed by believing in politics outside of the liberal-

democratic variety, and thus may be interrogated for its function in preserving faith in the staid, post-historical and post-political present.

Importantly, depoliticising effects may not be unique to thanatourism or its attachments to deathly and superstitious histories, particularly if we consider that it is often difficult to convincingly demonstrate that thanatourism is different from heritage tourism (Light, 2017). Accordingly, future researchers should consider how tourism sites besides those associated with death may be useful to capitalist realism. Seeking out vestiges of the Jacobean world of witches in Lancashire may be broadly comparable to that of visitors gazing upon the relics of 20th century “Yugo-nostalgia” across museums in the Balkans (Čaušević, 2019), or pilgrims who travel to Rocky Mountain rendezvous sites to re-enact the early 19th century American West fur trade (Belk & Costa, 1998). These expressions of heritage consumption, like witchcraft tourism, foment fantasies about returning to older systems which have passed into history, priming service providers to respond with market-friendly representations. However, unlike Belk and Costa (1998) who conceptualise visiting a semi-mythic past as an innocuous opportunity for social play, or Čaušević (2019), who speculates on its utopian spatial possibilities, we see the potential for heritage to contribute ideologically to visitors’ passive acceptance of the market-dominant present. The pre-liberal past can indeed be rediscovered and enjoyed as “temporary solace” (Čaušević, 2019, p. 23) *but*, we suggest, only so long as it is not taken too seriously and any realistic hopes for its permanent revival are jettisoned upon exiting the gift shop.

We encourage an evolving stream of critical tourism research that interrogates the diverse and changing functions of not only thanatourism, but all of heritage tourism’s obscene supplementarity for supporting the market-dominant present.

6.0 REFERENCES

- Ahlberg O., Hietanen, J., & Soila, T. (2021). The haunting specter of retro consumption. *Marketing Theory*, 21(2), 157–175.
- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and his world* (H. Iswolsky, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Belk, R.W., & Costa, J.A. (1998). The mountain man myth: A contemporary consuming fantasy. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(3), 218-240.
- Brophy, P. (1986). Horrality – the textuality of contemporary horror films. *Screen*, 27(1), 2–13.
- Čaušević, S. (2019). Reclaiming heritage from anti-communist discourse. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 77, 12-25.
- Cluley, R., & Dunne, S. (2012). From commodity fetishism to commodity narcissism. *Marketing Theory*, 12(3), 251–265.
- Dale, C., & Robinson, N. (2011). Dark tourism. In *Research themes for tourism* (pp. 205-217). Wallingford UK: CABI.
- Daly, E. (2022). Boredom at the end of history: ‘empty temporalities’ in Rousseau’s Corsica and Fukuyama’s liberal democracy. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 19145372211074.
- Derrida, J. (1997). *Of grammatology*. Corrected edition (G.C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Driessen, S. (2022). Summers of war. Affective volunteer tourism to former war sites in Europe. *Tourism Geographies*, 24(2-3), 326-345.
- Dunkley, R. (2015). Beyond temporal reflections in thanatourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 177–179.
- Fisher, M. (2009). *Capitalist realism: Is there no alternative?* London, UK: Zero Books.

- Fisher, M., & Gilbert, J. (2014). *Reclaim modernity: Beyond markets, beyond machines*. London: Compass.
- Fitchett, J., Lindberg, F., & Diane, M. (2021). Accumulation by symbolic dispossession: Tourism development in advanced capitalism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 86, 103072.
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). The end of history?. *The National Interest*, (16), 3–18.
- Fletcher, R. (2011). Sustaining tourism, sustaining capitalism? The tourism industry's role in global capitalist expansion. *Tourism Geographies*, 13(3), 443-461.
- Giroux, H. (2008). Slouching towards Bethlehem: The new gilded age and neoliberalism's theatre of cruelty. *Dissident Voice*, March 11.
- Goldstein, D.E. (2007). The commodification of belief. In D.E. Goldstein, S.A. Grider & J.B. Thomas. *Haunting experiences: Ghosts in contemporary folklore* (pp. 171-205). Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.
- Goulding, C., & Pressey, A. (2023). A palimpsestic analysis of atmospheres at dark tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 101, 103577.
- Hartmann, R., Lennon, J., Reynolds, D.P., Rice, A., Rosenbaum, A. T., & Stone, P.R. (2018). The history of dark tourism. *Journal of Tourism History*, 10(3), 269-295.
- Hasted, R. (1993). *The Pendle witch-trial: 1612*. Lancashire: Lancashire County Books.
- Holloway, J. (2010). Legend-tripping in spooky spaces: Ghost tourism and infrastructures of enchantment. *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space*, 28(4), 618–637.
- Inglis, D., & Holmes, M. (2003). Highland and other haunts: Ghosts in Scottish tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(1), 50–63.
- Jameson, F. (2003). Future city. *New Left Review*, 21, 65.
- Korstanje, M.E. (2017). *The rise of thana-capitalism and tourism*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Korstanje, M.E. (2021). The notion of thana-capitalism explained with clarity: Dark tourism and Genocide. *IJSSTH*, (22), 3.
- Kozinets, R.V. (2020). *Netnography: The essential guide to qualitative social media research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Kundera, M. (1985). *The unbearable lightness of being*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Laing, J.H., & Crouch, G.I. (2011). Frontier tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4), 1516–1534.
- Light, D. (2017). Progress in dark tourism and thanatourism research: An uneasy relationship with heritage tourism. *Tourism management*, 61, 275-301.
- Lynes, A., & Wragg, E. (2023). “Smile for the camera”: Online warehouse tours as a form of dark tourism within the era of late capitalism. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 14673584231173507.
- Manfreda, A., Ye, I. Q., & Nelson-Miles, K. (2023). Transforming tourism's “field (work) of view”. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 103, 103665.
- Milazzo, L., & Santos, C.A. (2022). Fanship and imagination: The transformation of everyday spaces into Lieux D'Imagination. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 94, 103399.
- Ozanne, J.L., & Appau, S. (2019). Spirits in the marketplace. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(5-6), 451-466.
- Potts, T.J. (2012). ‘Dark tourism’ and the ‘kitschification’ of 9/11. *Tourist Studies*, 12(3), 232–249.
- Seaton, A.V. (1996). Guided by the dark: From thantopsis to thanatourism. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2(4), 234-244.
- Sharpley, R., & Stone, P. (2009). (Re)presenting the macabre: interpretation, kitschification and authenticity. In: *The darker side of travel: The theory and practice of dark tourism* (pp. 109-128). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Soulard, J., Stewart, W., Larson, M., & Samson, E. (2023). Dark tourism and social mobilization: Transforming travelers after visiting a holocaust museum. *Journal of Travel Research*, 62(4), 820-840.

- Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(3), 491–503.
- Stone, P.R. & Morton, C. (2022). Portrayal of the female dead in dark tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 97, 103506.
- Sun, J., & Lv, X. (2021). Feeling dark, seeing dark: Mind–body in dark tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 86, 103087.
- Tinson, J.S., Saren, M.A., & Roth, B.E. (2015). Exploring the role of dark tourism in the creation of national identity of young Americans. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31(7-8), 856-880.
- Tzanelli, R. (2016). *Thanatourism and cinematic representations of risk: Screening the end of tourism*. Routledge.
- Wilson, J.Z. (2008). *Prison: Cultural memory and dark tourism*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Žižek, S. (1997). *The plague of fantasies*. London: Verso.
- Žižek, S. (2002). *Welcome to the desert of the real!* London: Verso.
- Žižek, S. (2004). From politics to biopolitics... and back. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103(2-3), 501–521.
- Žižek, S. (2006a). *The parallax view*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Žižek, S. (2006b). *The universal exception*. New York: Continuum.
- Žižek, S. (2008a). *The fragile absolute*. London: Verso Books.
- Žižek, S. (2008b). *In defence of lost causes*. London: Verso.
- Žižek, S., & Horvat, S. (2015). *What does Europe want? The union and its discontents*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Zwick, D. (2018). No longer violent enough?: Creative destruction, innovation and the ossification of neoliberal capitalism. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 34(11-12), 913–931.