

International Conference Call for Papers

The Thrill of the Dark:
Heritages of Fear, Fascination and Fantasy

25-27 April 2019

Birmingham, UK



POSTCARD

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE - CALL FOR PAPERS

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The Thrill of the Dark: Heritages of Fear, Fascination and Fantasy

Darkness is a complex concept. In a real and a metaphorical sense it invites contemplation and imagination of the sad, the unknown, the fearful and unwholesome desires. At the same time it is thrilling and strangely attractive, playing with deep and persistent cultural and metaphysical tensions of good and evil, right and wrong. Darkness provides space for hiding but also for exploration; it holds the potential for acceptance, forgiveness, or reconciliation for the haunted. Despite our apparent fear of the dark and the risks it hides, it nonetheless holds a powerful fascination which is evident in many aspects of popular culture.

Over recent years there has been tremendous interest in 'dark heritage' and associated 'dark tourism' but still we struggle with the powerful attraction of the darkness, the thrill it can provide and where (and if) we draw boundaries around its commodification its representation and the experiences we seek from it. Many forms of heritage function as a materialization of darkness and what it represents and offer ways of exploring how societies / communities deal with complex moral and emotional issues. Heritage sites and associated events / activities reflect both historical and fictional trauma and can act in illuminating and reconciliatory ways. Others hold onto their dark narratives to deliberately obscure and hide. Others still, play with, parody and test public sensibilities and capitalize on the idea of the thrill.

This conference seeks to explore the multiple relationships we have with the concept of darkness with reference to the legacies we create from it. How is the thrill of darkness expressed through the widely framed notion of heritage? How do we experience, negotiate, represent, commodify, valorise or censor the heritages of darkness? What and where is the thrill of the darkness and how is it negotiated across cultures, generations and gender? Why does the dark fascinate us so?

We invite researchers from the fullest range of disciplinary perspectives to consider these and other questions in an open-ended and thought-provoking manner. We welcome papers from colleagues working in anthropology, archaeology, architecture, business, education, English, ethnology, heritage, history, geography, languages, sociology and urban studies.

Please provide a 300 word abstract of your intended paper/presentation no later than **October 31st** via our online submission platform: www.universityofbirmingham.submittable.com



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