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Always Historicize!
Researching marketing history in a post-historical epoch

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Abstract. In recent years, marketing history has emerged as a major research stream. Impressive and welcome though these historical studies are, they are predicated on traditional research perspectives. History, however, is embroiled in a serious epistemological crisis, precipitated by the advent of postmodernism. Marketers, therefore, are becoming more historically minded at a time when accepted historical approaches are under mounting attack and the discipline is dissolving into a state of scholarly civil war. Indeed, the cutting edge of contemporary historical scholarship is found in the field of literary criticism, where historicism is replacing deconstruction as the method of the moment. This article examines the postmodern critique of (marketing) history, explains the literary theorists’ textual alternative, provides a worked example of postmodern historicism and explicates the methodological implications for marketing research. Key Words • Fredric Jameson • heritage parks • historicism • marketing research • post-history • postmodernism

“The postmodern . . . is an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.” (Jameson, 1991: ix)

Approximately 20 years ago, Savitt (1980) made the case for historical approaches to marketing scholarship, and many academics have responded to his call (e.g.
Golder, 2000; Holden and Holden, 1998; Hollander and Rassuli, 1993; Lavin and Archdeacon, 1989; Low and Fullerton, 1994; Sheth and Fullerton, 1994; Smith and Lux, 1993). Marketing history, to be sure, is far from the largest of our field’s manifold subdisciplines, but few would deny that it has proved remarkably fertile, especially in recent years (Brown, 1997). The principal journals are peppered with historical papers, broadly defined, and one leading commentator has contended that history is the key to the postmodern marketing condition, that much-heralded, if still somewhat hazy, state of scholarly ecstasy and intellectual beatitude (Sherry, 1991).

The latter-day rise of historical research is partly attributable to the sheer enthusiasm of its academic advocates, who organize a biannual conference, circulate a dedicated newsletter and generally promote a retrospective perspective (see, for example Jones and Cunningham, 1997; Hollander et al., 1995). However, it is also due to the growing acceptance of post-positivist research methods in what has long been a positivist discipline (Jones, 1991; Nevett, 1991), as well as the interventions of non-business school based scholars, many of whom have investigated marketing phenomena, such as advertising, branding and public relations, thereby focusing outside attention on our specialism’s fascinating history (Ewen, 1996; Lears, 1994; Marchand, 1998; Tedlow, 1996). A no less significant factor is the steady maturation of marketing as an academic activity – 100 years and counting (Jones and Monieson, 1990) – which, when coupled with the retirement of numerous leading lights of the postwar marketing revolution, has prompted a plethora of researcher recollections and emeritus memoirs (Fisk, 1999; Hollander, 1998; Kotler, 1999; Levy, 1999).

Academics are not alone, moreover. Marketing practice has become increasingly historically minded, as the recent cavalcade of retro-commercialists, retro-products, retro-services and retro-scapes, bears eloquent witness (Brown, 2000; Naughton and Vlasic, 1998; Sivulka, 1998). Naturally, these presentations of the past have not gone unnoticed by the scholarly community. Some consider marketing’s re-production orientation to be a manifestation of the fin de siècle effect, humankind’s propensity to look back as centuries draw to a close (Baudrillard, 1994; Briggs and Snowman, 1996; Showalter, 1991), whereas others have examined the advent of nostalgic themes in advertising and the significance of consumer nostalgia generally (Belk, 1991; Holack and Havlena, 1992; Holbrook, 1993; Holbrook and Schindler, 1996; Stern, 1992).

Yet, despite these impressive developments, there is a dark cloud – a conceptual cloud – on the historical horizon. For all their surface vitality, the vast majority of marketing publications are predicated on traditional schools of historical scholarship, be they interpretive or impositionist (see below, p. 52). Of late, however, the canons of historical method have been challenged by the advent of postmodern perspectives and the associated, admittedly apocalyptic, suggestion that history has ended (Fukuyama, 1992; Neithammer, 1992). What is worse, while professional historians have been engaged in polemical and often rancorous internecine debate, the empirical torch has been passed to literary theorists, where historicism is displacing deconstruction as the method of the moment (Hamilton, 1996).
Marketers, therefore, are wrapping themselves in the historical flag at a time when history itself is facing a postmodernism-precipitated crisis of representation and the cockpit of postmodernism, literary criticism, is actively reinventing historical research. In such confused and confusing circumstances—anakin to conceptual Musical Chairs—many marketing researchers might be tempted to consign history to the trashcan of history. Such an action, however, would be unnecessarily precipitate, particularly at a time when retromarketing is all the rage and nostalgia is no longer a thing of the past. The purpose of the present paper, then, is to extract the method from history’s postmodern madness and show how marketing history can be meaningfully researched in a post-historical epoch. It commences with a summary of the postmodern critique of historical scholarship; continues with a consideration of contemporary historicism, as articulated by leading literary theorist Fredric Jameson; culminates in an application of Jameson’s historicist perspective to a retromarketing exemplar, consisting of three heritage parks in the USA and Ireland; and concludes with some reflections on the future for marketing history. Our intention is not to undermine accepted historical constructs or procedures, nor to decry the academic endeavours of traditionally-minded marketing historians, but merely to demonstrate, after the immortal Oscar Wilde (1891/1983: 359), that ‘the one duty we owe to history is to re-write it’.

The end of (marketing) history

In a recent survey of the scholarly topography, marketing historians Knight et al. (1997: 209) posed the ultimate imponderable, ‘does the arrival of postmodernity spell the end of history?’ The answer to this question, almost inevitably, is yes and no. If by ‘history’ one is referring to political, social, cultural or military events that took place sometime in the past, then the answer is No, plain and simple. Human history accumulates with every passing day and, short of an environmental catastrophe, massive meteorite strike or thermo-nuclear induced holocaust, it will continue so to do. If, on the other hand, ‘history’ is taken to mean the textual output of professional historians—books, articles, reviews, etc.—then the answer is Yes. Probably. The scholarly pursuit known as history has been particularly hard hit by postmodern intrusions and, although most historians continue to toil in a ‘business as usual’ mode, the cerebral consensus is that postmodernism has very serious implications for established historical approaches (Ankersmit and Kellner, 1995; Heller, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Tosh, 2000). ‘Clearly,’ as Knight et al. (1997) note, albeit not without understatement, ‘the postmodern era poses problems for marketing history as a field of study.’

In order to appreciate the post-historical situation, it is necessary to summarize the pre-postmodern position. Or, rather, positions. Like most mature academic disciplines, history is highly internally variegated and several schools of thought are discernible. Until recently, according to Jenkins (1991, 1995, 1997), the vast majority of professional historians espoused a ‘commonsense empiricist’ stand-
point. That is to say, they deliberately eschewed theoretical or philosophical speculation, remained resistant to law-like generalizations and held firm to the view that reliable and objective knowledge about the past can be obtained from careful scrutiny of the historical record. True, the available evidence may be incomplete and the documentation imbued with the biases of the original authors or compilers. Nevertheless, disinterested interrogation of primary sources by properly trained professionals can uncover the truth – albeit the provisional truth, subject to continued critique and reappraisal – concerning the past or specific parts thereof. Historical knowledge is thus cumulative and, although historians’ desire to understand the past ‘in its own terms’ represents an unattainable ideal (notwithstanding Collingwood’s [1946] heroic attempt to prove otherwise), history nonetheless comprises a congeries of conscientiously gathered, carefully sifted and systematically tested factual evidence about the way things were (Tosh, 1999; Warren, 2000).

Exemplary works of traditional historical scholarship, in other words, offer idiographic interpretations of past events based on proven facts, which are scrupulously assembled and painstakingly organized. Alongside the ‘interpretivists’, however, a second group of so-called ‘impositional’ historians can be identified (Munslow, 1997). They are impositional in as much as they seek to identify ‘patterns’ in the historical record, much to the chagrin of inductively inclined traditionalists, who cleave to the anti-pattern position famously articulated by H.A.L. Fisher. The pattern seekers, admittedly, are a disparate lot. At one extreme are those scholars who espouse (much reviled) macro models of historical development, be they Marxian, cyclical or stage-type teleologies (Burke, 1992; Graham, 1997). At the other extreme are the Annalistes, a group of (largely) French historians who attend to the deep-seated, semi-permanent structures – geological, climatic, demographic, inheritance practices, land tenure and the like – that underpin and exert a continuing influence on short-term historical processes (Himmelfarb, 1987). Somewhere in between are the Cliometricians, who bring a battery of sophisticated statistical techniques to bear on historical time series, providing the data are sufficiently robust to withstand quantitative treatment (Iggers, 1997). Cliometrics, in many ways, is the jewel in the crown of historical science. While few subscribe to Hempel’s (1963) contention that scientific history is capable of identifying covering laws and making meaningful predictions, the hypothesis-testing, theory-constructing, generalization-seeking aspirations of the hard social and natural sciences remain a powerful role model for many western historians (Roberts, 1996). As Savitt (1980: 54) points out in his seminal statement on marketing history, ‘historical research must retain the objectivity of scientific method, following its structure as closely as possible.’

Half a generation on from Savitt’s stentorian call to academic arms, it is evident that many marketing scholars have rallied to the historical flag. Thanks, in no small measure, to the proselytizing endeavours of Stanley C. Hollander and his colleagues at Michigan State University, marketing history is a burgeoning subdiscipline, which embraces research based on interpretivist and impositionalist perspectives alike (Firat, 1987). The Cliometric approach, for example, is
epitomized by Pollay's (1986) longitudinal content analysis of materialism in US advertising; the Annales school undergrads Fullerton's (1988) critique and reformulation of the hackneyed product-era/sales-era/marketing-era conceptual schema; and Lavin's (1995) archival analysis of 1930s radio programming is an exemplary work of traditional historical scholarship, as indeed (to name but three) are Witkowski's (1989) study of the non-importation movement prior to the Declaration of Independence, Belk's (1992) investigation of materialism's manifestations during the Mormon migrations of 1847–1869, and McCracken's (1988) reflections on the putative consumer revolution in Elizabethan England. Macro models of historical development, such as the wheel of retailing, the product life cycle and the fin de siècle effect, are also old academic favourites, though their inherent determinism and extreme impositivism render them unacceptable to many traditionally minded marketing historians (Nevett, 1991).

Alongside its long-standing hostility towards notions of historical recurrence, marketing history has been chary of latter-day postmodern intrusions. The few references to postmodern history currently extant are ambivalent at best and antipathetic at worst (Brown, 1997). In this regard, of course, marketing historians are closely aligned with the historical community per se, where traditional aspirations to truth, objectivity and understanding the past as it really was remain deeply entrenched. These assumptions, however, have recently been challenged by postmodern philosophers, who contend that historical truth is unattainable, that objectivity is impossible and that Ranke's timeless injunction, _was es eigentlich gewesen war_, is a self-serving fiction (Jenkins, 1991). Fiction, in fact, is the essence of history, according to the postmodernists, insofar as it involves telling stories based on selected, sifted and synthesized historical 'facts' which are themselves shaped, structured and set out by the storyteller concerned (Warren, 2000). History, they argue, is inescapably textually mediated – documents, archives, pamphlets, etc. – and hence historians' desire to let the facts speak for themselves is exposed as an act of scholarly ventriloquism. Postmodern history, in effect, has collapsed the above-mentioned distinction between history as past events and history as written account of past events. Consequently, the literary qualities of historical texts are central to the postmodern critique (Berkhofer, 1995; Cohen, 1988; de Certeau, 1988; Mohanty, 1997).

In a series of landmark volumes, Hayden White (1973, 1978, 1987) has interrogated the publications of 19th-century 'monumental' historians – Michelet, Macaulay, Carlyle, Bruckhardt and the like – arguing, after literary theorist Northrop Frye, that these are characterized by four main modes of emplotment: romance, comedy, tragedy and satire. LaCapra (1983, 1985), likewise, has pioneered textual interrogations of a wide variety of historical works, ranging from Marx to Ginzburg, and champions the use of even diverse modes of literary expression – irony, humour, parody, scatology – rather than the dry, depersonalized, third-person, passive-voiced norm that has predominated throughout the postwar period. Schama (1992), similarly, has indulged in a number of historiographic experiments that both draw attention to and blur the hitherto sacrosanct boundaries between known fact and complete fiction. In doing so, he has pre-
cipitated a series of counter-factual speculations on 'what if' or 'virtual' history (Durschmied, 1999; Ferguson, 1997), which are a world away from traditional historians' preoccupation with the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth (McCullagh, 1998).

More to the point perhaps, the postmodern challenge to history's basic premises - the core of its Methodology of Scientific Research Program, so to speak (Lakatos, 1970) - has precipitated a veritable orgy of pro-postmodern and anti-postmodern writing. For some historical reactionaries, the postmodern is an abomination, hardly worth discussing in polite society, albeit worthy of a wary eye (Appelby et al., 1994; Himmelfarb, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1998). Others wield the postmodern axe with impunity, possibly for purposes of personal professional preferment, and happily predict a post-historical implosion (Jenkins, 1997, 1999; Munslow, 1997). And yet others seek to see both sides of the argument in classic best-of-all-possible-worlds tradition (Evans, 1997; Fox-Genovese and Lasch-Quinn, 1999). When the passion, polemic and petty personal squabbles are set aside, however, these scholarly Candides, Cassandras and Cyclopes are as one in their concern for the nature of historical knowledge and the pertinence of its preferred methods in a post-historical epoch. History may not have ended, as such, but disputatious historians have debated the discipline to a standstill. Or so it seems.

Ironically, history's crisis of representation has come at a time when historicism is enjoying a revival among the liberal arts in general and literary theory in particular (Brammigan, 1998; Hamilton, 1996). The word, admittedly, is burdened with somewhat controversial antecedents. Fortysomething years after Sir Karl Popper's famous philippic, The Poverty of Historicism, the term is still tarred with connotations of communism, fascism and the deliberate distortion of historical facts for nefarious political purposes. As Fullerton (1987) shows, however, historicism 'proper' has nothing whatsoever to do with Popper's (1957: 3) presumption that it represents

... an approach to the social sciences which asserts that historical prediction is their principal aim and which assumes that this is attainable by discovering the rhythms or the patterns, the laws or the trends that underlie the evolution of history.

To the contrary, the Historimus of Ranke, Sybel, Droyden and analogous 19th-century German pioneers was diametrically opposed to Popper's model-building misappropriation. The historian, instead, emphasized the uniqueness of historical phenomena, maintained that the past is fundamentally different from the present and stressed that each epoch should be grasped in terms of its own ideas and principles (Iggers, 1997).

Although Historimus was deeply interred at the start of the 20th century, the turn of the 21st has witnessed its dramatic exhumation, a veritable return of the Rankean repressed. However, just as some of the most remarkable marketing chronicles are being written by non-marketing academicians (e.g. Bogart, 1995; Bowlby, 2000; Jardine, 1996; Rappaport, 2000), so too the renaissance of historicism is led by literary theorists and cultural studies specialists rather than pro-
fessional historians. Such is the popularity of an historicist stance among literary critics that it has taken over from deconstruction as the cutting edge of the liberal arts (Abrams, 1993). Aply encapsulated in Louis Montrose’s (1989: 20) much-cited chiasmus: ‘a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history’, today’s historicists are in revolt against ‘formalist’ approaches to literary theory. Whereas deconstruction and its immediate predecessor, the New Criticism, examined textual artefacts as free-standing entities, thereby ignoring the processes of authorial creation, reader reception and historical context, contemporary historicism engages with issues of textual construction, circulation and consumption. The aim, however, is not to understand history in its own terms, but in today’s terms, by means of a dialogue between past and present, by fusing the horizons of then-and-there with here-and-now (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2000).

It can be contended, therefore, that historical research in a post-historical epoch rests on literary theory rather than time-steeped historical constructs, either interpretive or impositional. It seeks to comprehend contemporary attitudes toward and engagement with the past, what Jameson (1991: 279) enigmatically terms ‘nostalgia for the present’. Its ultimate purpose, furthermore, is not to let the past speak for itself, as was once the case, but to ‘think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place’ (Jameson, 1991: ix).

**History is what hurts: the cultural logic of Fredric Jameson**

As is the case with most schools of contemporary literary criticism, historicist approaches come in many shapes and forms. These range from the ‘cultural materialism’ of Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield to the ‘new historicism’ of Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose (Brannigan, 1998; Ryan, 1996). Without doubt, however, the commanding figure is Fredric Jameson, whose 1981 rallying cry ‘Always Historicize!’ did much to initiate the latter-day historicist turn among literary theorists and whose codification of postmodernism has propelled him to the front rank of the lit-crit corps. True, Jameson has not been accorded the scholarly superstar status of fellow postmodernists Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard or Roland Barthes, who also espouse historicist positions on occasion, but he has been variously described as ‘the most important cultural critic writing in English today’ (McCabe, 1992: ix), ‘the foremost contemporary literary critic’ (Kellner, 1994: 424) and ‘one of that small group of international theorists whose work defines the parameters of contemporary theoretical debate’ (Homer, 1998: 1). More to the point perhaps, Jameson frequently deals with what many would consider to be marketing matters – hotels, shopping centres, television commercials, blockbuster movies, globalization and so on – and often employs marketplace metaphors in the pursuit of his intellectual aims. Yet, despite frequent citation of his work by marketing researchers (albeit most of these references are to a single, celebrated article on postmodernism and con-

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sumer society), the full scope of Jameson’s historicist method remains to be extracted, examined and explained.

In considering the Jamesonian ‘method’, the single most salient point to note is that there is no method, as such. Or rather, there is no explicit statement of what his analytic procedures entail. In this regard, of course, Jameson’s approach is very much in keeping with the Marxist critical tradition, which rests on dialectical reasoning. Dialectics assumes that every object or concept contains within it that which it is not and that both are necessary for things to make sense (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1973; Anderson, 1983; Bhaskar, 1994). Hence, day is only comprehensible in terms of night, male in terms of female, rural in terms of urban, good in terms of evil, life in terms of death, etc. It is the task of the theorist to investigate such absent presences and combine ostensibly contradictory positions in an attempt to attain higher levels of understanding. Accordingly, the style of Jameson’s writing, which is characterized by enormous dialectical sentences hinging on a semi-colon, seeks to explicate and exemplify at one and the same time. That is to say, Jameson’s method and form are inseparable. The way he makes his case is part of the case (Hardt and Weeks, 2000; Homer, 1998; Young, 1990).

Notwithstanding the notoriety of Jameson’s interminable ‘sentences’, which are embedded in prodigiously long paragraphs that stretch without missing a beat to the distant horizon of his seemingly unending essays, the key point is that his literary form literally informs. This is not a mere stylistic affectation, it must be emphasized, because Jameson maintains that history is inaccessible to researchers except through cultural texts and representations, be they paintings, plays or heritage parks. Language, furthermore, interposes itself between the cultural representation and the researcher. Thus, by writing in the way that he does, Jameson demonstrates that language is not transparent and that analysts do not have unmediated access to the object of their investigation. The opacity of Fredric Jameson’s style is commensurate with the complexity of the cultural artefact under consideration. As Jameson (1971: xiii) graciously explains, if a little less than helpfully,

\[ \ldots \text{density is itself a conduct of intransigence; the bristling mass of abstractions and cross-references is precisely intended to be read in situation, against the cheap facility of what surrounds it, as a warning to the reader of the price he has to pay for genuine thinking.} \]

Lucidity may be unobtainable under the cultural logic of late capitalism, but the Jamesonian literary corpus contains hints, exhortations and, indeed, imperious imperatives pertaining to appropriate analytic procedures. For the purposes of exposition, these can be divided into three key themes – narrative, hyperspace and retrotopia – which together inform his attempts to think the present historically in a time of post-historical amnesia.
Narrative

Unlike many prominent postmodern thinkers, such as Baudrillard, Foucault and Barthes, whose research has been characterized by marked changes of direction and periodical epistemological breaks, Fredric Jameson has told a fairly consistent story. And the story he tells is about storytelling. From his earliest work on Sartre (Jameson, 1961) to his recent reflections on Brecht (Jameson, 1998a), narrative and narrativity are central to the Jamesonian oeuvre. As he trenchantly observes in his breakthrough text, The Political Unconscious, ‘the all-informing process of narrative is the central function or instance of the human mind’ (Jameson, 1981: 13). What is more, whereas rival postmodern pundits have famously announced the demise of ‘grand narratives’ — scientific progress, human emancipation, economic growth, and so on — Jameson resolutely refuses to alter his stance on narration. Not only does he consider narrative all pervasive, evident in everything from casual conversation to philosophical system-building, but history itself consists of nothing but narratives (since the actual events of ‘real’ history are inaccessible to present-day investigators). So convinced is he of the continuing relevance of narration, that his analysis of postmodern culture is itself predicated on the grandest of grand narratives, Marxism, as articulated in Ernest Mandel’s (1975) three-stage historicist model of market capitalism, monopoly capitalism and late or multinational capitalism.

The paradox, of course, is that Jameson’s own storytelling skills are negligible, verging on non-existent. His books are not so much books as collections of discursive essays. Essays, moreover, which lack a conventional beginning, middle and end, or any semblance of a structure, let alone a plot. Indeed, it is entirely symptomatic of this singularly circumlocutory scholar that by far the longest of the 10 chapters in his best-selling volume, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991), is the ‘preliminary’ conclusion!

Hyperspace

Fredric Jameson’s manifest inability to narrate the importance of narrative, despite the prominent position it occupies on his intellectual agenda, is by no means meaningless. On the contrary, the essential point about Jameson’s texts is that they are organized spatially, like patchwork quilts, rather than the traditional temporal alignment – from ‘once upon a time’ to ‘happily ever after’ – that is the linear, narrative norm in the western literary tradition (Eagleton, 1986). Space, according to Jameson, is the fundamental organizing principle of time in postmodernity, strange though this sounds, and it is fair to say that he is best known for his historicized representations of spatial representations (Los Angeles’ Bonaventure Hotel, in particular). Like Jean Baudrillard (1983) and Umberto Eco (1986), two other noted authorities on postmodern hyperspace (Perry, 1998), Jameson brilliantly evokes the total confusion (disorientation), unfocused arrangement (de-centredness) and blurred boundaries (de-differentiation) of postmodern architecture.
In this respect, Jameson (1984, 1985, 1994, 1998b) repeatedly opines on the
difficulties of representing such utterly bewildering, well-nigh ubiquitous, place-
lessly anonymous spaces (see Augé, 1995; Relph, 1987; Sherry, 1998b) and, to this
end, suggests 'cognitive mapping' as a possible conceptual option. Although it is
based on the familiar map-drawing process posited by urban planner Kevin Lynch
(1960), the technique is transformed in Jameson's dexterous hands to include
poems, plays, paintings and various alternative forms of non-cartographic repre-
sentation. Unlike Derrida's deconstruction, indeed, it is more than a mere anti-
method methodology, a procedure for representing the unrepresentable.
Cognitive mapping provides a means of linking the individual with society, the
local with the global and, above all, the past with the present (Jameson, 1992,
1998c).

Retrotopia

Just as the swirling confusion of the typical Jamesonian sentence encapsulates the
discombobulating experience of postmodern hyperspace (McCabe, 1992), so too
a retrotopian orientation pervades his prodigious academic output. On the one
hand, his writings are curiously old-fashioned, notwithstanding the contemporary
subject matter, since his Marxist lexicon of 'hegemony', 'reification' and 'false
consciousness' is somehow redolent of 1970s radicalism (Jameson, 1991). This
imbues his publications with a not unpleasant but slightly anachronistic tone, the
textual equivalent of a retro-product or television series. On the other hand, his
style is 'truly utopian', a monumental accumulation of magisterial sentences, each
one grammatically correct, laboriously constructed and flawlessly executed, with
every subclause cemented firmly in place (Eagleton, 1986). Like utopianism itself,
they are unbearably, stupefyingly, almost impossibly perfect.

Be that as it may, Jameson (1971, 1985, 1998b) consistently defends human-
kind's utopian inclination, the unending search for something better, arguing that
it is inscribed in even the most derided cultural artefacts, from airport art and the
Reader's Digest to romantic fiction and Las Vegas kitsch. But whereas modernists
maintain that utopia resides in the infinite future, postmodernists look to the
illimitable past. One of the central precepts of postmodern historicism is that
stylistic innovation is impossible, because everything has already been tried, and
all that remains is to recombine or evoke past styles and methods in an ironic,
playful, reflexive manner. According to Jameson (1984), postmodern history is
predicated on pastiche, the imitation or amalgamation of different forms,
categories and modalities, and schizophrenia, a disconcerting loss of historical
depth – the very sense of history – since all possible pasts are perpetually present
in the here and now. The apotheosis of these traits is the nostalgia or retro-film
(e.g. American Graffiti, Blue Velvet or, more recently, L.A. Confidential), which
recreate the feel, shape and tone of older films while remaining incontestably
up-to-date. Nostalgia in postmodernity, then, has nothing to do with emotional
trauma, a deeply felt longing for past times (Davis, 1979; Lowenthal, 1985;
Tannock, 1995), but the depersonalized, pseudo-historical appeal of a bygone
aesthetic. History is no longer reached through the archive, but by means of stylistic revivals, temporal stereotypes and spatial representations, which convey various forms of past-ness, be it 1930s-ness, 1950s-ness or an eternal 1970s beyond historical time.

**Reading retro-scapes**

The Jameson approach, in short, boils down to an obsession with time, space and storytelling. He provides no set procedure or step-by-step process which will produce a post-historical analysis, if followed to the letter. That said, Jameson’s ‘method’ of historicist scholarship unfailingly involves: (a) focusing on cultural representations of historical phenomena rather than continuing to fetishize the archive; (b) avoiding dogmatism or reductionism, while remaining open to alternative perspectives and sources of information, however unorthodox; (c) accepting that, in today’s irredeemably commodified culture, researchers are denied critical distance from the matters they study, though reflexivity can provide some scholarly leverage; (d) seeking to write in a way that goes beyond description to an attempted evocation of the thing in itself; and (e) adopting a dialectical approach to the representations under investigation, coupled with a willingness to think the unthinkable and overturn the accepted. The ultimate aim is to induce moments of ‘dialectic shock’, where readers are forced into a new perception by the surprising juxtapositions or iconoclastic inversions of the essayist. The most successful of these stimulate a ‘sense of breathlessness, of admiration for the brilliance of the performance, but yet bewilderment, at the conclusion of the essay, from which one seems to emerge with empty hands – without ideas and interpretations to carry away with us’ (Jameson, 1991: 188).

Portrayed in such terms, Jameson’s historicist stance may appear at best intellectually disreputable, at worst academically barbaric. Certainly, when compared with the canons of traditional historicist scholarship, to say nothing of the hypothesis-testing procedures of mainstream marketing research, the charges of irreverence (and indeed irrelevance), cannot be gainsaid. It is important to appreciate, however, that literary and cultural studies do not adhere to the methodological etiquette of the social sciences and, while Jamesonian historicism is sure to fall short when set against established scientific precepts of validity, reliability, objectivity and replicability, this presupposes that such precepts are applicable in the first place. ‘The whole point about literary analyses’, as Brown (1999: 11) notes, ‘is that they are not scientific, they cannot be “proven” as such and to ask them to meet standard acceptance criteria is to apply the wrong standards.’

Rather than attempt to extract the conceptual pips from the ripe passionfruit of Jameson’s literary estate – a process that destroys in order to understand – it may be more appropriate to provide a worked example of his historicism in action. Although his anti-method method is adaptable to all manner of retromarketing phenomena, the rapidly rising tide of heritage parks is an appropriate place to start (e.g. Bagnall, 1996; Belk, 1995; Goulding, 1999, 2000; Rojek, 1995; Walsh,
1992). In the first instance, heritage centres epitomize Jameson’s point that history is only available to us through cultural representations. Second, they have never been studied by Jameson himself, which is surprising given the catholicism of his cultural palette. Third, they have been repeatedly excoriated by historians for misrepresenting the past for purely commercial purposes (Berger, 1998; Boniface and Fowler, 1993; Hewison, 1987; Lowenthal, 1998; Moore, 1997). Fourth, the proliferation of heritage parks is very much in keeping with marketing’s retro-orientation and its burgeoning interest in the long-neglected P of place (Sherry, 1998b, 2000). Fifth, they illustrate that the marketing ‘texts’ interrogated by interpretive researchers are not confined to works of literature, advertising campaigns or indeed interview transcripts, but can also include the built environment (e.g. Belk, 1996a; Macarlan and Stevens, 1998; Wallendorf et al., 1998). Sixth and finally, heritage parks are widely regarded as the acme of postmodern culture, even though the living history concept dates from the early years of the 20th century (Bennett, 1995; Featherstone, 1991; Handler and Saxton, 1988; Leon and Piatt, 1989; Urry, 1990). An often uneasy amalgam of traditional museum and theme park, they typically comprise an array of replica, reconstructed or reproduction buildings on an historical site and, as often as not, are peopled with attendants in period costume who perform suitably antiquarian tasks (shoeing horses, baking bread, spinning thread, etc.). Colonial Williamsburg, Plimoth Plantation and Greenfield Village are perhaps the best-known manifestations of the heritage park format, albeit variations on the theme are found in every corner of the globe, from Scandinavia to South Korea (Hannigan, 1998; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Walsh, 1992).

With the best will in the world, it is very difficult to draw a ‘representative’ sample from such an array and, in keeping with analogous interpretive research (e.g. O’Guinn and Belk, 1989; Sherry, 1990, 1998a; Stern, 1996; Thompson, 1998a; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1992), the present study comprises an analysis of three contrasting yet closely related exemplars: the Museum of Appalachia, the Ulster-American Folk Park and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (Appendix 1). Equally in keeping with the interpretive paradigm, the research programme comprised a combination of qualitative approaches, including semi- and unstructured interviews, obtrusive and unobtrusive observation, accompanied visits, introspection, photography, literature searching, field note composition and general in-depth immersion in the heritage park experience. The data-gathering process, it has to be said, is not markedly different from the interpretive research mainstream. The essential difference resides in the interpretation that is placed upon the historical text – the Jameson-inspired search for narrative, hyperspace and retrotopia – as well as the way in which these thematic imperatives are represented.

Narrative

Heritage parks are many things for many people, but one of their primary purposes is to serve as a narrative mart. They are places where stories are eagerly
traded, freely exchanged, happily swapped and relentlessly commodified. These stories, what is more, come in all shapes and sizes, both made-to-measure and ready-to-wear. Many are pre-packaged and carefully processed, with all political impurities removed, and many more are ostensibly spontaneous, organically cultivated and, on occasion, carry a Surgeon General’s health warning. Some are officially sanctioned, others subvert the existing order and yet others are hidden under ye-olde display cabinets, like the moonshine liquor of legend. Only the cognoscenti know they are there.

Most important, perhaps, this narrative capital circulates at macro, meso and micro levels. The macro level refers to the oft-recycled horror story of the heritage industry per se, and how it turns the use value of historical events into the exchange value of tourist attractions (Lowenthal, 1998). In this particular chronicle, marketing is ordinarily portrayed as the big bad wolf, which has not only devoured the innocent heroine of historical integrity but has regurgitated the unfortunate victim as an unholy mess of bogus logos, banal branding exercises, spurious strategic plans, cheapjack souvenir stalls and embarrassing promotional stunts. Despite widespread use of marketing tools and techniques, many museological purists still regard marketing with more than a degree of suspicion. Marketing, they believe, is the bane of historical integrity. Using the past to move merchandise is considered iniquitous bordering on blasphemous. Selling contaminates, it profanes the sacred and sacralizes the profane, notwithstanding ample historical evidence of God and Mammon’s co-mingling (Belk et al., 1989; McDannell, 1995; Moore, 1994).

The meso level, by complete contrast, emphasizes the individual institution’s role as official guardian of an endangered local culture – the region’s collective unconscious – and invariably employs a happily-ever-after employment. That is to say, it focuses on the fact that such parks rescue and preserve the precious objects under threat from rapacious developers and analogous money-grubbers. Like pure-of-heart, stout-of-limb, fair-of-face Prince Charmings, the parks’ curators sally forth into the ignoble, materialistic, not so magic kingdom, extricate the imperiled pump house, police station, Pullman railway carriage or whatever, and carry it back, piece by carefully labelled piece, to the fastness of their heritage fortress, where it is patiently reassembled, lovingly restored and perfectly preserved for the good of future generations as yet unborn. The parks themselves, furthermore, are given the once-upon-a-time treatment, from fairy tale beginnings (the vision of a great, if initially ridiculed man), through the various Rowstowesque stages of narrative growth (battles against penny-pinching philistines and petty bureaucrats) to self-sustained storytelling (ambitious plans for the future).

The micro and perhaps most important level pertains to the tales told within the individual heritage parks, many of which are simulacra of Adam Smith’s dictum that collective benefits flow from individual pursuit of fame and fortune. Thus, the Ulster-American Folk Park uses the Mellon banking dynasty as a paradigm of Scots-Irish emigration and the Museum of Appalachia is replete with rags-to-riches accounts of great achievement, from Daniel Boone and Davy
Crockett to Mark Twain and Roy Acuff. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, on the other hand, is somewhat lacking in the capital of chronicler—explanatory plaques on the dwellings are prohibited, for example—though this shortfall in its storytelling capacity will be overcome when the narrative manufacturing facility that is the museum visitors’ centre, is finally brought into commission.

Above and beyond the political economy of storytelling, the micronarratives produced in and around the parks are not dissimilar to the ‘patchwork quilts’ of Fredric Jameson. They are many, varied, overlapping and highly decorative, while possessing a semblance of an overall pattern. Each of the parks, for example, provides a spatial trail of tales, a suggested sequence of exhibit visits. These are indicated by arrows on the visitors’ maps, which are automatically issued on entry and, if followed to the letter, give the customer a synoptic sense of how the narrative quilt unfolds. Intertwined into the basic story-line of emigration (Ulster-American Folk Park), material progress (Museum of Appalachia), or geographical difference (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum), are the tales pertaining to the individual buildings and the people associated with them (Appendix 2). In some cases, these are immortalized on display boards, plaques or panels and attached to the buildings themselves, but in all cases they are available in the accompanying textual material (guidebooks, maps, pamphlets, etc.). The employees in attendance also have their tales to tell, not simply about the building or its former inhabitants, but also about the activities they are demonstrating (weaving, cooking, metalwork), the folkways of times past and, not least, the manifold objects, implements and furnishings on display.

In addition to attendant-inflected narratives about families, food and farming, the fullest stories are found in the exhibition halls, visitors’ centres and indoor galleries, where the various tableaux are described in great, possibly excessive, detail. These range from the familiar tale of the Titanic in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum to the almost-forgotten story of Sergeant York, a distinguished First World War hero, whose 15 minutes of immortality (including a 1944 biopic starring Gary Cooper) are remembered in the Museum of Appalachia’s Hall of Fame. They are typified, however, by the remarkable achievements of the commercially minded Campbell brothers retold in the Ulster-American Folk Park:

Robert Campbell, who went on to become a fur-trapper and builder of Fort Laramie, was born in this house in 1804. Robert emigrated to America in the early 1820s to join his older brother Hugh, who had emigrated in 1818. Robert moved west for health reasons and soon became involved in the fur trade. By 1836 Robert left his active life in the mountains and settled in St. Louis, where he continued to supply expeditions of trappers and pioneer settlers as they set out on the Oregon Trail...

Hugh Campbell emigrated to New York in 1818 aboard the Phoenix. He kept a journal of his voyage which sheds much light not only on his character but also on the nature and organization of the early nineteenth-century emigrant trade. Hugh became one of Philadelphia’s most prominent merchants before eventually going to St. Louis where he entered into partnership with his brother Robert.

(Plaque on Campbell Cabin, UAFP)
Rich though the intra-park chronicles of buildings and their past occupants undoubtedly are, some of the most priceless stories stem from contemporary consumers' interaction with the parks. Unanticipated encounters with resonant objects, be it a tin bath, a room setting or a complete exhibit, call forth all sorts of meaningful visitor narratives, which are verbally recounted to the accompanying family group, to unrelated bystanders or to the staff in attendance. Often all three. Indeed, the spontaneous response to what are ostensibly trivial artefacts—a three-legged pot, a china doll, a haystack—is invariably highly animated, verging on rapturous. In keeping, what is more, with this essentially aesthetic reaction, the memories evoked by the objects are routinely described in appropriately poetic language ("I like those rolled-up haystacks because when they get snow on them they look like raisin bread").

Equally poetic are the stories that consumers have to tell about themselves. Every single interviewee had a tale or two up their sleeves, which they were ready, willing and able to recount. As might be expected, most of these chronicles concerned the individual informant, their background and biographical details, albeit accounts of holiday experiences, the reasons behind their visit and the current day's events in particular, also figured prominently. Nevertheless, by far the most striking stories were historical in character, insofar as they referred to the convoluted genealogy of the informant's family.

Interestingly, the content of these ancestral sagas is compatible with Hayden White's aforementioned four-category classification of narrative archetypes: comedy, tragedy, irony and romance (see Stern, 1995). Thus, there are richly comic tales of dastardly forebears (horse thieves, mistaken identities); profoundly tragic tales of those who failed to make it or narrowly escaped death (turned back at Ellis Island, lost in the San Francisco earthquake); inadvertently ironic tales like the wealthy couple committed to healthy living, whose family fortune was made from tobacco; and, more often than not, deeply romantic tales of star-crossed lovers, tearful reunions and all's well that ends well. In practice, as Stern rightly observes, these categories overlap considerably and it is not unusual for a family saga to contain elements of two or more narrative archetypes, as in this typical 'just so' story.

R1: I know on my mom's side there were people who came over because of the famine. I'm not sure if that was the case on my dad's side. But I know with her it was. And then of course, my great grandmother, she came over for other reasons. She was in love with a Frenchman and the family didn't want her to marry him. So they sent her to America 'cause she was young and they figured she could work her passage back or whatever. She came through Ellis Island, and they used to go down to the island and hire whoever came off the ship. And they hired her to work in a quarry as a cook and a waitress and she could never get back to her Frenchman. However, one day about a year later there he was sitting at the end of the table. He had come to America and then hired by the same company.

I: Incredible!

R2: She was carrying a tray of fish and dropped them on the floor!

R1: She dropped her tray of fish and they got married. They both made the journey and it was meant to be, I guess.

(American tourists, male and female, UAFF)
Hyperspace

The foregoing story, impossibly perfect though it is, not only demonstrates that amateur historians employ much the same archetypal emplotments as their professional brethren, but it also illustrates the interpenetration of space and time that is integral to Jameson’s notion of postmodern hyperspace. Indeed, all three sites under investigation are appropriately *decentred, disorientating* and *de-differentiated*, albeit to different degrees and with slight but significant variations from park to park.

When it comes to decenteredness, for example, the studied spaces differ in the extent to which they lack a focal point. The Museum of Appalachia is semi-circular in arrangement, with an empty meadow in the middle, and it is thus the most decentered. The Hall of Fame, considered the focus of the facility by its owners, occupies a somewhat eccentric spatial situation, very much in the wings of this natural amphitheatre. Indeed, if there is a focal point at all it is entirely intangible; namely, the bluegrass music that wafts over the meadow thanks to the players on the porch. More intangible still are the fanciful tales of the legendary Fall Homecoming, which succeeds in filling the empty, central space with 50,000 people for four magical days per year.

The Ulster-American Folk Park, by contrast, possesses a much clearer focal point, though what it gains in spatial coherence it loses in temporal correctness. At present, the replica sailing ship and simulated dockside area act as a hinge between the Irish and American halves of the heritage park. However, it is a hinge that is historically bereft, as pedants and purists are wont to note, since it is the single most ‘inauthentic’ exhibit in the entire facility. What’s more, it flies in the face of the park’s previous spatial and (now geographically marginalized) historical fulcrum, the ‘original’, the ‘actual’, the ‘authentic’, Mellon farmstead. Fakery has thus displaced the real, in accordance with the precepts of modernity.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, on the other hand, falls somewhere in the middle. Overall, the three geographically dispersed parts of the park – transport galleries, rural area and township – combine to convey a strong sense of spatial decenteredness. However, the individual components are decentered to different degrees. The transport galleries are very compact; the rural area is deliberately diffuse; and, bizarrely, the township is a bit of both. Its buildings are clustered, horseshoe-like around an empty, as yet undeveloped central space. Indeed, for aficionados of Irish townscapes, which typically comprise a single main street with closely packed buildings on either side (Buchanan, 1987), this decentered arrangement is particularly disorientating, verging on the surreal.

Disorientation, however, is everywhere apparent in the studied heritage parks. Despite the museum-keepers’ diligent attempts to orientate their patrons, through signposts, arrow-strewn maps and the best verbal efforts of on-site employees, visitors frequently fail to follow the suggested spatial sequence. It is not unusual to find confused customers turning cartographic cartwheels trying to work out where, exactly, they are and what building stands before them. Once again, this is true in all three cases, though it is especially strongly marked in the
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, largely on account of its sheer geographical extent and the fact that the story it tells is spatial rather than temporal. That is to say, the park depicts different parts of Northern Ireland, both urban and rural, at a single point in time. Unfortunately, the guidebook fails to stress this basic point and, as the individual buildings often predate this chronological anchor (even though their fixtures, fittings and furnishings relate to the designated date), customer disorientation is the inevitable outcome. The lack of adequate signage, coupled with a marked reluctance to indicate which buildings are which and, not least, a visitors' map containing misdirected arrows pointing at misnumbered buildings, only adds to the confusion.

This disorientation, it must be emphasized, should not be taken to mean dissatisfaction or discontent. The opposite, in fact, is often the case. Disorder, distraction, disconcertion and detective work – wondering where they are, what things were and where to next – are an important part of the heritage park experience and enjoyed up to a point. Some consumers, admittedly, adopt an essentially instrumentalist approach to the attractions, focusing on prices, accessibility, signage, catering facilities and so on. The entire ‘day out’ agenda, in other words. For others, however, the whole heritage experience has a slightly phantasmagoric, pleasantly blurred, agreeably confusing quality. De-differentiation, the judicious melding of past and present, here and there, education and entertainment, is the raison d’être of the heritage centre.

De-differentiation, indeed, is especially evident in spatial, interpersonal and representational senses. Spatially, the boundaries of the parks are not clear-cut on account of their open-air qualities. What is and what is not part of the heritage park, be it a propinquitous farmhouse or barn or meadow, is not readily apparent to visitors. Similarly, on-site activities, such as building work or agricultural tasks, are liable to be interpreted as part of the ‘performance’ rather than the necessary workaday activities that they actually are (however, the museum-keepers are aware of this and seek to capitalize on any such ‘living history’ connotations). The same is true of interpersonal interactions among visitors, since the interactee may or may not be an employee of the museum and, even when they are not, may still provide useful historical information or answer a burning question. Consumers, in fact, are especially tickled when they are mistaken for a member of staff or taken to be part of a tableau.

R: I was sitting down changing film in the camera and one of the Australians came around and he looked over at me.
I: He thought you were one of them?
R: He reckoned I looked like one of the exhibits because there was only one chair and I was sitting on it changing film!

(Australian tourist, male, UFTM)

Most important, perhaps, the parks brilliantly succeed in blurring the boundaries between fake and real. Although the buildings are reconstructions or replicas and, in most cases, stocked with artefacts that were not originally in situ, they are nonetheless regarded as ‘really, really real’ by consumers and curators.
alike. They are presentations of the past, not representations of the past, for both the patrons and producers of such historical displays. Even when the artificiality of the exhibit is explicitly alluded to, as in the case of the Mark Twain cabin in the Museum of Appalachia (which contains a photomontage of the original dilapidated building), this does not detract from the perceived authenticity of the experience. Consumers not only accept that a certain amount of poetic licence is necessary but that the most poetically licensed parts of the park are the most authentic. The producers, likewise, are absolutely adamant that their representations are real and take great exception to any suggestion otherwise. At the same time they are fully aware of the essential artificiality of the heritage exercise and their complicity therein (Appendix 3).

Retrotopia

This issue of authenticity is nowhere better illustrated than in the dockside exhibit at the Ulster-American Folk Park. Almost without exception, the interviewees felt that this facsimile of part of a sailing vessel gave a real sense of the emigration experience. True, their experience takes all of six minutes compared to six weeks; the ‘sea’ is flatter than flat calm; the ‘sky’ is a concrete ceiling 15 feet above the deck (albeit painted black to simulate night-time); the cramped below-decks area, containing the human cargo, is uncrowded, uncluttered and completely odour-free; and there is not a single original artefact anywhere on display.

Yet, in keeping with Jameson’s conceptualization of historical consciousness in postmodernity – as a bygone aesthetic, a stylistic evocation, a sense of a sense of the past – this dockside sensorium seems real to the people passing through. It may well be a pastiche, a piece of historical theatre, but the very act of ‘embarking’ and ‘dismounting’, as well as handling the bolted-down barrels, bunks and analogous ‘artefacts’, gives people a much better idea of what it must have been like to leave home, and undertake a perilous trans-Atlantic trip, than any number of written accounts or static, look-don’t-touch tableaux.

I: Tell me what you think of it.
R1: The buildings are marvellous, aren’t they?
R2: They’ve done a great job.
R1: It’s spectacular here. It really is spectacular, especially when you get to the boat. I mean, we had ancestors who came over on boats, though not quite as bad as that. But think of the people.
I: It’s amazing.
R1: Yes, really. To put that many people on a little boat like that. It just, it’s terrifying. You can feel your stomach churning over.

(American tourists, male and female, UFTP)

Just as heritage parks, with their congeries of reproduction buildings from markedly different times (and places) are a pastiche, an egregious ‘perpetual present’, so too consumers respond to them in a decidedly ‘schizophrenic’ fashion. They are regarded as absolutely authentic, the real thing, a presentation of the past exactly as it was. No more, no less. At the same time, heritage parks are
two-a-penny these days. They are all pretty much the same, offering minor variations on the weaver's cottage, working smithy, ye-olde attendants and souvenir key-rings. Heritage sites, in many ways, are an historical equivalent of the Big Mac, tasty at the time but quickly forgotten. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that consumers don't take things too seriously. People visit heritage parks for many reasons – to wallow in nostalgia, to find out about family history, to repay people for their hospitality, to 'do something' with house guests or vacationing schoolkids, because it's on the itinerary of the tour bus, etc. – but prominent among them is diversion, escapism, fun. A day out. Hence, they tend to adopt a wry, ironic, droll, facetious and, not least, playful attitude (Belk and Costa, 1998). They frequently joke about the implements, artefacts, exhibits and times past, particularly their forebears' patent lack of height. The museum attendants, furthermore, often enter into this bantering, jesting, post-tourist spirit of mockery, repartee and persiflage. Many visitors, in short, play at being visitors and are ever ready to reflect irreverently on their experiences and adventures, interview included.

R: How long are you doing this interviewing, son. What's it all about?
I: We're doing a research project on the Scots-Irish, the ethnic group. I come from the north of Ireland and this part of America was settled by the Irish.
R: So, you're catching up on the culture?
I: Yeah, because it's very similar. The surnames for example and the way people talk, the music, all sorts of things, such as the dancing you do. It's very similar to Irish dancing.
R: So you ought to have one of them little skirts?
I: I don't have the legs for it . . .

(Adult male, 70s, MoA)

More important, perhaps, they also reflect on their reactions to the past and, once again, an air of ambivalence prevails. On the one hand, glimpses of times past generate enormous admiration for their forebears. These were people who had little in the way of material resources or labour-saving devices; who faced enormous privation and ever-present threats of physical violence; who eked a living from difficult and unyielding environments; who were ravaged by disease and died before their time; and, who lived lives that were nasty, brutish and short. Nevertheless, they won through in the end. They raised their children, who raised their children in turn. They not only managed to manage, but built a great country by the sweat of their brows and unshakeable belief in the Lord. They didn't have much but, as they were unaware that they didn't have much, they were perfectly content.

I: What's your reaction when you see places like this?
R: I love it. I think the quality of life in some ways was much better back then.
I: Why do you say that, in what sense?
R: Because I don't think temptation was as prevalent for most people, 'cause they didn't have TV and all that stuff to taunt them. They just had what was around them and they made do with what they had. But in other ways you could die from a broken arm and in other ways there were other hardships. I think people were probably more content. They had more of a purpose. They had to work. Not like these days.
I: So, do you feel then that we've lost something?
R: We've definitely lost something and it will never come back. When I see places like this I'm disappointed that we lost so much, maybe.

(Agent female, 40s, MoA)

By the same token, not a single interviewee would choose to live in times past, given the opportunity to do so. Some older informants, admittedly, were prepared to consider changing places, but only because the buildings brought back roseate memories of long-departed childhood (Holbrook, 1993; Holbrook and Schindler, 1996). Even here, however, pragmatism usually won out insofar as the parks were often criticized for being too perfect and underplaying the problems that had to be endured. Admirable though their ancestors' achievements undoubtedly are; closer though families and communities may well have been back then; simpler, slower-moving and less-stressful though past times sometimes appear, they were also exceedingly hard times; they were filthy and demanding times; they were hellish as well as heavenly times. The material benefits of modern society - television, refrigeration, supersonic transportation, medical miracles - are not to be relinquished lightly, even though they are accompanied by degeneracy, drug addiction and environmental despoliation. It seems that, for many visitors, material progress and moral decline go hand in hand. The past, in short, is a foreign country and diverting though occasional package tours are, one wouldn't want to live there.

I: So what do you think people get from their visit? What do they take away from here?
R: I think they take away a greater appreciation of the hardships that people had. I get sort of tired hearing about the good old days because they were good in a lot of ways but man they were hard, they were so hard and I think people come away with that feeling. I'm so thankful for what we have, I'm thankful from where I came from and I'm thankful that I don't have to live in those times. But I think it also makes them feel better about themselves. So many times you go to places . . . I don't want to criticize it, Dollywood is fine, it serves a purpose . . . but many times you go to places like that and all you come away with is a feeling you spent your money. You don't, I don't know, maybe . . .

(Marketing manageress, 30s, MoA)

Discussion: rewriting history

Although the heritage parks under examination amply illustrate Jameson's preoccupation with time, space and storytelling, many readers of Marketing Theory might wonder how his historicized research approach differs from 'accepted' interpretive procedures. Thompson (1997, 1998b), after all, has highlighted the importance of consumer narratives in his workbench explication of existential phenomenology; Belk repeatedly stresses the time-space nexus in his naturalistic analyses of collecting, globalization, religious theme parks, and so on (Belk, 1995, 1996b; O'Guinn and Belk, 1989); and Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) have explained how ethnographically derived themes are embedded in wider sociocultural traditions. Storytelling, similarly, is the very first step of Zaltman's (1997)
much-lauded metaphor elicitation procedure; space is central to the 'blitzkrieg ethnography' and 'deep hanging out' posited by Sherry (2000); and temporal matters were high on the agenda of pioneering interpretive researchers, McCracken (1988) especially.

Such overlaps, of course, should come as no surprise, since Fredric Jameson's work is part of the same humanistic-cum-liberal arts theoretical tradition that embraces Thompson's existentialism, Belk's naturalism, Arnould and Wallendorf's ethnography, Zaltman's metaphor wrangling, Sherry's spatial poetics and McCracken's ClioMarketing. At the same time, however, Jameson's historicism is different in four important respects. The first of these is that it is predicated, like most schools of literary theory, on a pre-existing set of conceptual conventions (Scott, 1994; Stern, 1989). In sharp contrast to traditional interpretive inquiry, which ordinarily permits the primary constructs and relationships of interest to emerge during the research process (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Spiggle, 1994), literary criticism typically starts from a stated theoretical standpoint – be it Marxist, Psychoanalytical, New Critical or whatever – which is employed to make sense of, and give meaning to, the textual artefacts under investigation. Thus, feminist literary critics seek to expose androcentrism in the texts they study; post-colonialists do likewise with western cultural imperialism; and deconstructionists show how texts inevitably contradict themselves and thereby undermine the very arguments they are seeking to advance. To be sure, this does not mean that literary theorists' preferred stance is rigid or doctrinaire, or force fits texts into a pre-existing conceptual framework (though the New Critics' process of close reading was often accused of this, as was Deconstruction in the hands of the so-called Yale School). On the contrary, literary criticism involves an iterative to-ing and fro-ing dialogue between the texts at issue and the stated theoretical position, with flexibility the overriding principle.

A second and closely related point concerning literary theory in general and the Jamesonian approach in particular is that it involves reading 'against the grain'. That is to say, it employs the chosen theoretical stance to highlight hitherto hidden or occluded aspects of the texts in question. Fredric Jameson, for example, is widely regarded as a Marxist literary critic (Eagleton and Milne, 1996; Haslett, 2000), even though his more recent texts only pay lip service to Marxian precepts, and this effectively impels investigators to consider how capitalist ideology is inscribed in the heritage park experience. Certainly, the parks' lionization of thrift, endeavour, hard work, getting on, material success and God-fearing, clean-living middle-class values, as exemplified by their ostensible obsession with petit bourgeois commercial premises like pharmacies, print shops and purveyors of comestibles, is particularly striking in this regard. More striking still is the sheer amount of selling that goes on – souvenirs, programmes, special events, fast food, etc. – notwithstanding the park-keepers' ostentatious abjuration of base materialism and the mercantile mindset. At the same time, reading against the grain raises the question of what is excluded from, or downplayed in, the heritage parks' historical tableaux. Now, this is not to suggest that women, the working classes, political activists, people of colour and dissident groups generally are
ignored (since contemporary museums are nothing if not politically correct). On the contrary, the Museum of Appalachia includes a display of Native American artefacts; the Ulster-American Folk Park covers the Catholic emigration of the 19th century and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum tries to be all things to all people. Nevertheless, the narrative contradictions are there for all to see and are picked up by astute consumers of the heritage text. A number of informants, certainly, felt that the parks failed to present a fully rounded portrayal of past times. The Museum of Appalachia was described as ‘very masculine’ on occasion, due to the profusion of picks, shovels, chain saws, sledge hammers and manifold macho farming implements. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum was deemed overwhelmingly middle class, though this had as much to do with its situation in an affluent suburb, colloquially known as ‘the Gold Coast’, as the exhibits themselves. The Ulster-American Folk Park, meanwhile, was considered by some to be slightly one-sided in its treatment of emigration, on account of its emphasis on the Protestant, Scots-Irish experiences of the 18th century to the neglect of the mass Catholic migrations of the 19th. Be that as it may, the paramount conceptual point is that what is not said is just as important – in certain respects more important – as what is actually said. Silence speaks volumes; the unspoken says it all.

A third and in many ways the most obvious difference between Jameson’s historicist method and extant exemplars of interpretive research is the way it is written. Whereas most published marketing research in the qualitative tradition adopts an essentially realist mode of discourse – convoluted language and flights of literary fancy are expressly eschewed, in the main? – Jameson’s essays invariably strike readers as willfully obscurantist and well nigh incomprehensible. In this regard, of course, Jameson is no different from many postmodern philosophers, who are not exactly renowned for the limpid sellucidity of their prose. Nevertheless, the existence of attempted expositions, such as this (or, analogously, Stern’s [1996] explanation of Derrida’s deconstruction) simply does not prepare readers for the sheer ‘otherness’ of Jameson’s writing style. Even his admirers openly describe it as extremely opaque and at least one would-be explicant was forced to retire, defeated, by the ‘encrusted majesty’ of Jameson’s convoluted cogitations (Connor, 1997: 50). These difficulties, it must be reiterated, are not trivial, since Jameson repeatedly stresses that his writing style is an integral part of his procedure and that its impenetrability reflects the complexity of cultural representations in late capitalism.

The question, therefore, has to be asked: should a work of historicist scholarship predicated on the Jamesonian approach be written in an attempted evocation of his style? Should scholars strive for the ‘empty-handed bewilderment’ that Jameson advocates, thereby estranging and possibly antagonizing esteemed colleagues (from quantitative and qualitative ends of the scholarly spectrum alike), who continue to adhere to established procedural protocols and stylistic standards? If, indeed, a Jamesonesque pastiche is produced, what evaluative criteria should be used to judge the success or failure of the attempt? Presumably, some kind of aesthetic criteria have to be pressed into service – and a number of
non-scientific options have been proposed by interpretive marketing researchers (see Thompson et al., 1998) – but most would agree that it is bewildering to consider how bewildered one should be before bewilderment is attained, be it the empty- or full-handed variant.

Irrespective of the literary style adopted, the fourth and final difference between Jameson’s approach and the interpretive mainstream inheres in his dialectical perspective, which involves the identification, interrogation and, above all, integration of opposites. Many qualitative researchers, admittedly, articulate their emergent themes in terms of binary oppositions and show how these polarities interpenetrate (e.g. Hirschman, 1988; Spiggle, 1994). Jameson, however, seeks to transcend – what he terms ‘transcoding’ – the thesis and antithesis by synthesizing them at a higher level of understanding, though this is easier said than done.

To this end, consider the three aforementioned themes of narrative, hyperspace and retrotopia. Dialectically speaking, perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the heritage park narratives is that they are incomplete, fragmented or hopelessly muddled. Again and again consumers’ retold tales simply failed to make sense. Part of this difficulty may be due to the interview situation. Not everyone is a natural raconteur, after all. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to suggest that it is this very lack of coherence that prompts people to undertake genealogical research in the first place. Part of the pleasure of such historical environments is that they provide an opportunity to fit the family puzzle together and thereby create a coherent narrative. Of course, the problem with being a detective in one’s own detective story is that the trail goes cold. The clues eventually run out or become irritatingly ambiguous. And it is at this point of chronological breakdown that heritage parks come into their own. By telling an exemplary or stereotypical tale, they enable genealogically minded visitors to acquire the story wholesale or appropriate pertinent details. Whatever they need, in fact, to make their own narrative cohere. Indeed, museum-managers’ desire to ‘get the story across’, their obsession with telling a coherent tale that consumers can ‘take away with them’, stands in very sharp contrast to visitors, who are less interested in getting the story straight than getting their story straight. Postmodern patrons of heritage parks thus adopt a pick ‘n’ mix attitude to the narratives on offer, taking only the bits and pieces they require. They fill up their cart of chronicles from the priceless, albeit pre-packaged, date-stamped and best-before labelled, historical narratives of the self-service storymarket. Tales R Us.

With regard to hyperspace, the most compelling issue is how, exactly, people make sense of the heritage park experience and the essentially dialectical relationship between authenticity and inauthenticity. As noted previously, heritage parks are patently fictional milieux, yet taken to be fact. Visitors not only regard them as ‘really, really real’, but it is the inauthentic aspects of the park – the costumed attendants, the fake activities, the staged events – that are largely responsible for this sense of authenticity. True, the parks wouldn’t work without assemblages of genuine artefacts, since they convey the necessary aura of oldness, but they have to be brought to life, they require an injection of ersatz use value before kitsch commodity fetishism is evoked among counterfeit consumers. It seems, then, that
there is more to the heritage park experience than MacCannell’s (1999) suggestion that tourists are engaged in a search for authenticity, which is obligingly staged by purveyors of package tours. More even than Ritzer’s (1998) contention that today’s post-tourists are looking for inauthenticity, the faux familiarity of Disney, McDonald’s, Pizza Hut and Holiday Inn. This may be so, but the present study suggests that the authentic–inauthentic dichotomy has itself been de-differentiated and people are looking for authentic inauthenticity. Authenticity no longer resides in unvarnished historical facts but in ‘real’ people performing ‘real’ tasks with ‘real’ implements in ‘real’ buildings. Granted, the people are actors, the skills have been learnt for the purposes of display, the implements are as genuine as the legendary hammer that has had five replacement shafts and three new heads, and the buildings have been constructed, at least in part, with new materials by today’s rude mechanicals. However, it is these demonstrations of the art of work in an age of reproduction mechanicals that makes the heritage park experience real. Historical truth may be unobtainable in a post-historical epoch but it can be rendered true by its staging, by the manufacture of truth effects, by the authentic-ness rather than the authenticity of the experience.

Retrotopia, moreover, contains a profoundly paradoxical dimension, which can be resolved through dialectical reasoning. On the one hand, visitors express enormous admiration for their hard-working forebears. They cast envious glances at the simplicity, the community spirit and the close-to-nature lifestyle of days gone by. They reflect ruefully on the irreverence, indolence and downright depravity of the modern world. At the same time, no-one would choose to return to this seeming golden age, even if it were possible, due to the lack of labour-saving devices, the absence of advanced medical facilities and, not least, the sheer mind-numbing, back-breaking, life-shortening drudgery of the daily grind. It seems, then, that people’s overall attitude to the good old bad old days is un-ambiguously ambiguous. Postmodern nostalgia does not involve unreflective luxuriations in days of yore. Nor does it regard the past from a presentist position of self-satisfied superiority. Nor, for that matter, is it a straightforward combination of pleasure and pain – pleasure in the past and pain that it has passed. It is rather a combination of pleasure and pain for both the past and the present, what Jameson (1991: 251) terms ‘eudemonization’. The present is characterized by material progress and moral decline, the past by moral probity and material deficiency. Utopia, therefore, does not lie in the future, because material advance will come at a moral cost. Nor does it lie in the past, since a material price has to be paid for moral worth. It resides, rather, in the interaction of the two, where the best of the past meets the best of the future, where handicraft embraces high-technology, where production and marketing combine.

Indeed, it is entirely appropriate that marketing integrates all three Jamesonian themes and transcodes the heritage park experience per se. The evidence clearly indicates that some of the most nostalgically freighted exhibits in the parks are associated with commercial life. The candy store in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, the pharmacy in the Ulster-American Folk Park, the post office, barber’s shop and, especially, general store in the Museum of Appalachia all triggered
exceptionally happy memories. Bygone brands, passé packages and long-forgotten foodstuffs are especially salient, generating all sorts of pleasurable recollections about the comparative merits of the products concerned. Even cure-all-ills patent medicines, containing 40 percent alcohol and liberal doses of opium, are bathed in the luminous light of anamnesis, as are the promotional vehicles — namely, itinerant medicine shows — that accompanied them.

I: Does this store remind you of your childhood?
R1: Yeah, it does. It does.
R2: I see some products that were still around when I was growing up.
I: Such as?
R2: The Rinso soap powder. Robin Starch was around, Maxwell House coffee.
R1: That chewing tobacco, there.
R2: That powder was popular with people, at one time.
I: What was it?
R2: A kind of tonic that people drank.
R1: That came after World War Two, didn’t it?
R2: I don’t remember the timing exactly. All over the country they were drinking that, thinking it was the greatest tonic in the world. But it was 35 percent alcohol and they didn’t even know it!
R1: It would cure everything!
R2: Two or three summers in a row, when I was a kid, they’d come by selling that sort of stuff.
I: What, like the way they do it in the movies, with the guy selling the, you know, snake-oil?
R2: Yeah, they had a show with comedians and then they’d take a break every so often and go up and down the aisles trying to sell.
R1: Like commercials.
R2: They sold some candy and they sold some sort of tonic. I well remember that.

(A adult male and female, 70s, MoA)

Clearly, some of this affability may be attributable to confirmatory bias, on account of the presence of self-confessed marketing researchers, but it was equally apparent when the interactions of consumer and consumption were observed unobtrusively. What is more, it is reported in several analogous studies of living history museums (Fife and Ross, 1995; Merriman, 1989; Moore, 1997), where recreated retail stores are especially popular with visitors, the highlight of their tour. It seems, then, that marketing is an essential part of the heritage product, it is the glue that holds heritage parks together, it is the currency of the narrative mart, a postmodern hyperspace where the imagined past is presented. Bearing in mind that the heritage industry is roundly condemned by historical purists for its marketing-mindedness and bearing in mind that heritage park-keepers go to great lengths to emphasize their museological integrity and disdain for base commercialism, it is deeply ironic that marketing, of all things, turns out to be the secret of success, the fount of authenticity, the magical potion that permits heritage parks to live happily ever after.
Conclusion

Once a mere trickle of scholarly endeavour, marketing history has swollen into a significant research stream, if not yet a raging torrent. Thanks, in part, to the growing maturation of the marketing discipline and the recent millennial transition, recent years have been characterized by an increasingly retrospective orientation. These reflections range from studies of the roots of relationship marketing (Keep et al., 1998) to longitudinal analyses of market share stability (Golder, 2000). Impressive and insightful though such investigations are, their appropriateness is open to question. That is to say, they are predicated on traditional historical scholarship at a time when history is embroiled in a serious intellectual crisis precipitated by postmodernism. When history, in effect, has ended.

Not everyone, admittedly, accepts that established historical procedures have departed to the great academy in the sky, the empyrean elysée. But few would deny that conventional approaches are being carefully scrutinized, openly contested and subjected to mounting criticism. Fewer still would contradict the contention that literary critics rather than professional historians are at the forefront of post-historical research. The academic emphasis is shifting from the archive to the anecdote, from truth telling to telling tales, from give-me-the-facts to the given-ness of the facts and the form in which they are given. Literary style is superseding historical content and, while it is still possible to study marketing history in the conventional manner, the suitability of such methods is moot. Certainly, the mounting commodification of history, as evinced by the recent rash of retro-products, retro-services and retro-scapes, suggests that available conceptual alternatives are well worth exploring.

The present paper has examined once such alternative, the historicism of leading literary theorist Fredric Jameson, and attempted to show how his artistry can add to the theoretical palette of the marketing discipline. Although, like many interpretive researchers, Jameson emphasizes the importance of narrative, hyper-space and retrotopia, his investigative procedures are somewhat different from the qualitative norm. In particular, his mode of expression is a world away from the realist literary styles that characterize interpretive marketing research and traditional historical scholarship alike. Style, indeed, is the content of Jameson’s historicism. His obfuscations reflect the obtuseness of the object he observes. We expect to be bemused by cutting-edge mathematical models; why should avant-garde interpretive research be any different?

It remains to be seen whether Jameson-style historicism will capture the imagination of marketing academicians, not least on account of the current lack of assessment criteria. However, there is no shortage of historical ‘martifacts’ – be they heritage centres, nostalgia movies or retro-autos like the new Beetle – which are ripe for historicist analysis. If nothing else, the foregoing reading of three retroscapes reveals that, in a post-historical epoch, marketing and history are inseparable. Historical truth resides in its selling as much as its telling. The road to the past comes complete with toll-booths and parking restrictions. Contra
Oscar Wilde, the duty we owe history is more of a surcharge than a rewrite, a sales tax on text, a generous genealogical gratuity. Keep the change.

Appendix 1: Research sites

The Museum of Appalachia

Situated adjacent to the I-75, 16 miles north of Knoxville, Tennessee, the Museum of Appalachia is dedicated to preserving the way of life of the people of the region. It consists of 16 substantial buildings, plus outhouses and ancillary facilities, scattered in a loose semi-circle around an open, tree-fringed meadow. Exceptionally picturesque, especially in springtime, the 65-acre park is the life's work of John Rice Irwin, a former school-teacher turned folklorist and author. The museum, consisting of a single log cabin, opened in 1969 and, thanks to the founder's boundless enthusiasm, local celebrity and collector's eye for a bargain, it has steadily expanded, with further developments in train.

In addition to the punctiliously reconstructed, fully furnished and carefully maintained wooden buildings, which range from Mark Twain's family cabin to an implement-festooned blacksmith's shop, the museum includes a commodious Display Barn and three-storey Hall of Fame. The former contains the largest collection of pioneer artefacts in the USA — barbed wire, bear traps, band saws, beehives and many more besides — whereas the latter is a shrine to the region's renowned sons and daughters, though it also contains displays of toys, quilts, baskets, barrels, bayonets, unusual musical instruments, Native American relics and multitudinous Appalachian ephemera. A small restaurant, selling traditional, home-cooked vittles from the working farm, and a craft-cum-antiques shop, stocking locally manufactured gift items and excess objects from the founder's collection, are an integral part of the heritage park, as is a small, 100-seat auditorium, where musical performances (A Night in Old Appalachia) are staged for groups of visitors.

Although none of the three-strong management team has formal marketing qualifications, or indeed undertakes systematic market research — visitor comment cards excepted — the museum boasts an impressive year-round promotional programme. Most events, admittedly, are modest. As a rule, these involve one or two musicians on the veranda of the Smoke House, playing requests and chatting to visitors, or are tied to the inviolate requirements of the agricultural calendar: planting, ploughing, hoeing, harvesting, repairing outbuildings and Yuletide relaxation. However, the Annual Fall Homecoming, a four-day festival devoted to music-making, craft-working, storytelling and celebrating indigenous Appalachian culture, is the highlight of the year, attracting 50,000 people to the museum. The surrounding publicity, coupled with a professional press pack and occasional articles in The Smithsonian, Readers' Digest and Home and Garden, ensures that the park remains firmly in the public eye. Several television series have been filmed on site and it features in a video, shown countless times per season to millions of tourists, at Walt Disney World. All told, the museum attracts 100,000 visitors annually, making it the third largest attraction, after Dollywood and Opryland, in the state of Tennessee.
Ulster-American Folk Park

Opened in July 1976, to coincide with the US Bicentennial, the Ulster-American Folk Park celebrates the historic link between the two countries. As the annual St Patrick’s Day parades bear witness, Ireland has long been closely connected to the USA. No less than 12 American presidents, from Jackson to Clinton, are of Irish descent, as are figures as diverse as Andrew Carnegie, Ulysses S. Grant, John Wayne and, strange though it sounds, Alex Haley. While most Americans are familiar with the massive Irish influx of the mid-19th century, which largely consisted of Roman Catholics from the south and west of the island, an earlier, no less enormous wave of immigration took place in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the main, this consisted of Protestant dissenters from the north and east of Ireland, the forebears of whom had previously emigrated from Scotland. Industrious, obdurate and belligerent by turns, the Scots-Irish settled in the Carolina Piedmont and quickly spread throughout the Appalachians, Alleghenies and Tennessee Valley, as far west as east Texas.

The Ulster-American Folk Park commemorates these immemorial bonds by focusing on various aspects of the emigration experience. Situated in the rural hinterland of Belfast, Northern Ireland, the heritage park consists of two ‘halves’, one devoted to the Irish and the other to the American ends of the trans-Atlantic journey. These are linked by a full-scale, part- replica of an early 19th-century sailing vessel, the Brig Union, which is abutted on either side by re-created Irish and American street scenes. The emigrant experience is further evoked by the guiding thread of the Mellon family, who left Ulster in the early 19th century, settled in Pennsylvania, founded the famous banking dynasty and, to this day, remains part of the east-coast establishment. Thus, the Old World half of the park is centred on the original, if substantially rebuilt, Mellon farmhouse, and the New World half consists of full-scale reconstructions of their first farmsteads in the USA. The park, in fact, is part funded by the family, who also sponsored an impressive exhibition hall and indoor museum.

Although the Ulster-American Folk Park is primarily devoted to the Scots-Irish emigration of the 17th century, the 19th-century Irish-Catholic exodus is also encapsulated, both in stone and by means of an extensive genealogical database, which is available to visitors in search of their roots. In total, the park consists of 18 buildings, from weavers’ cottages and working forge to spirit grocers and subterranean corn crib, plus a museum shop, restaurant and Centre for Emigration Studies. Plans are afoot, furthermore, to substantially extend the American half of the attraction. Although it lacks any professional marketing personnel, the Folk Park’s imaginative promotional programme of fake wakes, re-enacted weddings, costumed re-creations of rural events and an annual Bluegrass Festival manages to draw approximately 130,000 visitors per annum. This is no mean achievement given the low population density of its immediate catchment area.

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

By far the largest of the three heritage parks under consideration, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum occupies a 227-acre site in the rolling hills on the eastern outskirts of Belfast, Northern Ireland. It opened (as the Ulster Folk Museum) in 1964 and nestles in the thickly wooded but carefully manicured grounds of Cultra Manor, a 19th-century stately home that now houses the museum’s education, conference and catering offices. Somewhat akin to its Appalachian counterpart, the museum is the
brainchild of a single individual, E. Estyn Evans, a prominent local academician who spent his career cataloguing the lifestyle of northern Irish country-folk. Inspired by its indefatigable founder, the museum was originally devoted to re-creating the Ulster countryside as it was at the start of the 20th century. Buildings, roads, hedgerows, fields, farm animals, waterways, agricultural activities and even the landscape itself were relocated, reconstructed and reconfigured to reflect the rural milieu around the individual reassembled buildings.

By the time of its 1972 merger with the Ulster Transport Museum, however, the focus of the museum had shifted from rural to urban, thanks to the construction of a small Ulster town, complete with church, chapel, courthouse, school, grocery store, newspaper offices and several terraces of housing. What’s more, the lower part of the site has seen the construction of the airy Transportation Galleries, which are given over to the museum’s internationally renowned collection of steam engines, buses, automobiles, motorbikes and, naturally, macabre memorabilia of Belfast’s best-known product, the Titanic. The museum also contains an indoor exhibition hall, devoted to static displays of agricultural implements; a small residential centre in a cluster of renovated 19th-century buildings; several separate car parks scattered across the spacious if uncoordinated site; and an administration block, which houses the archives, library and material relating to less tangible aspects of local heritage (music, dance, folklore, etc.)

As befits a two-time winner of the prestigious Museum of the Year award (Britain in 1972, Ireland in 1986), the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum employs a full-time, professionally qualified marketing director. Although market research is not gathered on a systematic basis, and although formal marketing plans are not prepared, a comprehensive programme of promotional events helps attract 180,000 visitors per year. During the busy summer season, moreover, several of the buildings are staffed with attendants who demonstrate rural crafts and respond to queries from customers. Unlike some of the better-known living history museums, such as Plimoth Plantation, the attendants are uncostumed, their responses are unscripted and questions are dealt with in the third rather than the first person (that is, they do not act the part of 19th-century country bumpkins, feigning disbelief when confronted with cameras, cars and the accoutrements of contemporary life). This practice may change, however, as part of a recent reorganization of museum administration in Northern Ireland, which incorporates the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Ulster-American Folk Park into a larger umbrella organization, The National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (Wilson, 1995).

Appendix 2: The Mellon House inscription

Camp Hill cottage. Thomas Mellon was born in this cottage on February 3, 1813. It was built by his father and uncle a few years earlier ‘chiefly by the labour of their own hands’ and stood on a 23-acre farm cut out of his grandfather’s larger estate. As a lad of 5, he accompanied his parents to America where he worked on his father’s farm near Pittsburgh in the state of Pennsylvania. Strongly influenced by reading Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography and encouraged by a far-sighted mother, he worked his way through Western University, now the University of Pittsburgh, became a Professor of
Latin and after studying law was admitted to the bar and later raised to the bench. On January 1, 1870, he gave up the practice of law and started a small private bank known as T. Mellon and Sons. Out of this institution evolved the present Mellon National Bank and Trust Company, one of the ten largest in the US. After a long and prosperous life, he died in Pittsburgh on February 3, 1908, at the age of 95. Among the prominent descendants of Thomas Mellon were his son, Andrew Mellon, president of the Mellon Bank and later Secretary of the Treasury in the cabinets of Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover, 1921–1932, ambassador to the Court of St. James, 1932–1933, and donor of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. to which he left his large collection of paintings. His son, Richard B. Mellon who followed Andrew as president of the Mellon Bank was a director of many companies, donor of the East Liberty Presbyterian Church and part donor with his brother of the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research. His grandson, William L. Mellon, a founder and chairman of the board of Gulf Oil Corporation, devoted his life to its growth and was the donor of the Graduate School of Industrial Administration at Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

(Plaque on Mellon House, UFTM)

Appendix 3: Fabricating the really real

Producer:

R: The vast majority of visitors think they’re actually seeing, like, the real thing. Mainly because the majority of our buildings are not replicas. They’re original buildings.
I: You don’t think your representations are misrepresentations, then?
R: Well, this is another debate. It’s a very topical debate, a very contemporary debate. Personally, I would prefer — there are others in the museum who wouldn’t see it this way — but I would prefer that when we’re bringing a building in, we bring it in as it was and build it as it was, absolutely. But there are others here who would say; well, if it doesn’t fit into a certain space, or there’s part of the building in a state of disrepair, or that you can’t really use, or whatever. Then, you’ve got to take a bit of it away, you’ve got to rebuild it, you’ve got to take some license here and there, for practical reasons. But, I personally would still like to see it exactly as it was, because what you see here is supposed to be authentic. It’s the real thing and if you’re not doing that, well, there are ethical and moral questions. At least, in my opinion. Although at the end of the day, as long as you’re not actually misleading people. If you’ve got a replica building, say it’s a replica building. If you’ve changed something in the building, say you’ve changed something in the building, so that you’re not actually misleading people.

(Marketing manageress, 40s, UFTM)

Consumer:

I: Can you tell me what you think of it?
R1: Seemed pretty authentic.
R2: Yeah everything. They said they took everything from somewhere else and brought it here and rebuilt it.
R1: Like a lot of places wouldn’t have, like, the real fires going and the real food. Everything was really, really real.
R2: I bet it cost them a bundle to do that.
I: I think it did. It’s very costly to represent it like that. So, you felt it was all real? There was nothing that jarred with you, then?
R2: The fact that they had somebody in every building explaining it was very clever.
R1: I live in California near a place called Solvang. It’s like, sort of supposed to be a replica of a Scandinavian kind of town. But everything seems really fake and stuff. This seemed really real.
R2: It was more than that. I went to Williamsburg. The only authentic thing was one building where they used to keep the munitions. Everything else was phoney, they just built it up. To me, that was fake.
I: Does it really make a difference?
R2: Yes it does, because these are original buildings. This stuff is really, really real. You can see, like, the old inscriptions that you wouldn’t see in a rebuilt building.

(American tourists, male and female, 50s, UAFP)

Consumer on Producer:

I: This here is Mark Twain’s cabin.
R: Mark Twain, interesting.
I: Would this have been typical of Appalachian cabins, all the implements and tools and stuff attached to the front like that?
R: No. I don’t really think so. I think it’s a museum display. They would sometimes have kept the tools handy, like an axe or cross-cut saw, but not on display like this, not on the front porch of the house.
I: Does it make you feel like the place is a fake?
R: No, not really, no. You just recognize that they’ve got so much stuff here that they’re grouping sometimes for places to put it where people can see it. These things are museums. They create stuff for the visitors.
I: Just like Dollywood or Walt Disney World?
R: Oh no, not like that. Those are entertainment, just entertainment. This is the way people lived. The idea here is to give people a sense of how people used to live. This is the way people really used to live around these parts.
I: This is the way they really did live?
R: I would say so, yes, back in the 1800s. But this sort of thing was well before our time.

(male and female, 70s, MoA)
Notes

1 Marketing historians frequently complain about the discipline’s ahistorical attitude and the regrettable shortage of published research in the area (e.g. Holden and Holden, 1998; Hollander and Rassuli, 1993). While this may have been true at one stage, it is no longer the case. Indeed, part of the historical ‘shortfall’ is attributable to marketing historians’ narrow interpretation of what constitutes historical research. A glance at the journals, however, reveals that marketing is increasingly preoccupied with the past. Recent publications range from the retrospections of prominent scholars, through special anniversary editions of top tier journals, to commentaries on the future of the field, which invariably involve an assessment of how we got where we are today.

2 ‘I can only see one emergency following upon another as wave follows wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalisations’ (Fisher, 1952: vii). It is noteworthy, however, that Fisher employs a wave (i.e. cyclical) metaphor to describe the flow of history. As Brown (1995) points out, this anti-pattern argument also presupposes an historical pattern, albeit a pattern of patternlessness.

3 Naturally, it is impossible to ‘prove’ that Jameson is a neglected figure, comparatively speaking, but fairly strong circumstantial evidence is found in Firt and Venkatesh’s (1995) biographical appendix on the leading lights of postmodernism. Fredric Jameson is not included.

4 With the exception of an off-the-cuff answer to a published interview question (Stephanson, 1987), Jameson (1991) only mentions heritage parks on one occasion. Even then, the reference is to a 1950s retrospective contained in a 1960s science fiction novel set in the then distant ‘future anterior’ of 1997!

5 As the ‘original’ Mellon house was also moved from its ‘actual’ location, six miles distant, and substantially refurbished before being opened to the public, the difference between it and the replica sailing vessel is one of degree rather than kind. Hence, it could be argued that as real fakery is being supplanted by hyperreal fakery, real reality doesn’t really come into it.

6 The different attitudes expressed towards heritage park experiences imply the existence of several customer segments, which may well be the case. As this matter has been addressed by Goulding (1999, 2000), it will not be considered here. That said, Jameson does provide the conceptual basis of a possible consumer typology, when he distinguishes between four forms of historicism: antiquarianism, which valorizes the past and prefers it to the present; existentialism, which attempts to understand the past in its own terms; structuralism, which seeks to uncover the deeper meanings of past events; and anti-historicism, which lionizes the present and elevates it over the past.

7 This issue, to be sure, has been much debated in marketing scholarship (e.g. Holbrook, 1995) and there are many extant examples of ‘experimental writing’. However, it is fair to say that the interpretive articles published in top tier journals tend to be written in a realist style, poetic opening paragraphs notwithstanding (cf. Belk and Costa, 1998).
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