

Material Culture in the Victorian Occult.

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This paper looks at the intersection of the belief in the supernatural and consumer culture in the context of an increasingly urban and modern Victorian Britain. Although developing initially in a rural context, folk superstitions quickly spread and thrived in the new city cultures that were rapidly developing at the time. These spiritualistic traditions then became entrenched in both rural and urban settings. At the same time, industrialization allowed for the increase availability of material objects leading to the production and marketing of amulets, charms, tea reading saucers and cups, Ouija boards, and tarot cards. This desire to consume 'spiritual' objects resulted from multiple complex emotions such as fear, loneliness, and curiosity which were exacerbated in the advancement of industrialization, urbanization and modernity. In other words, the objects, with their ties to spiritualism and the supernatural, provided a sense of comfort and control in an otherwise ever-changing social world. In a larger sense, these material objects, whether their intended purpose was spiritual or not, show historians the social life of commodities in Britain in the late nineteenth century and how studying these objects can help inform our understanding of modernity...