

Cyber Execration:
a case study of *Ushi no Koku*
Mairi and its
Re-Enchantment through online
cursing

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Abstract : The practice of *Ushi no Koku Mairi*, a Japanese form of casting curses, has sustained changes from a pre-modern tradition to an online form of execration. Though once a practice imbued with magical qualities, rigid rationalization has undermined such qualities, resulting in disenchantment. The current form of cyber execration, however, and its seemingly limitless virtual features have served to re-instate cursing's enchanting potential. This article provides a case study of *Ushi no Koku Mairi* as a phenomenon that is at once rationalized through systematic precepts of digital technology, and re-enanted through the spectacle of simulation, implosion and the manipulation of time and space.

Keywords : cursing, execration, Japan, rationality, re-enchantment

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*Cyber exécution : une étude de cas de Ushi no
Koku Mairi,
et son ré-enchantement à travers la malédiction en
ligne*

Résumé: la pratique de *Ushi no Koku Mairi*, une pratique japonaise qui consiste à jeter des malédictions, a subi des modifications, passant d'une tradition pré-moderne à une forme d'exécution en ligne. La rationalisation rigide semble saper les qualités magiques d'une telle pratique, et la désenchanter. Pourtant, la forme actuelle de cyber exécution, et ses caractéristiques virtuelles apparemment illimitées, ont pu rétablir le potentiel enchanteur de la malédiction. Cet article fournit une étude de cas d'*Ushi no Koku Mairi*, montrant que celle-ci est un phénomène rationalisé à travers les préceptes et la procédure systématique de la technologie numérique, et se trouve en même temps ré-enchantée par le spectacle de simulation, d'implosion et de manipulation du temps et de l'espace.

Mots-clés: malédiction, exécution, Japon, rationalité, ré-enchantement

1. Introduction

Studies of cursing or execration as social phenomena are diverse. Cursing has appeared as peripheral foci within literature on witchcraft (Alder, 1986; Hutton, 1999) ; emphasized as a product of magic (Berry, 1968 ; Borghouts, 1973 ; Suggett, 2008) ; and explored within studies of syncretic religions of the Americas.¹

Unlike these studies, this article explores cyber execration, or the practice of invoking misfortune upon others through casting curses over the internet. Cyber execration in Japan is often referred to as *Ushi no Koku Mairi*,² roughly interpreted

¹ In its popular conception, cursing is often associated with “voodoo,” a corrupted spelling of the Haitian religion of *Vodun*. See Murphy (1990) and Bartkowski (1998). Despite scholarship that argues the contrary, popular media has cast a rather negative image of this religion’s practices—in particular the said practice of malevolent cursing through the use of dolls. See Desmangles (1977), Faust (1980) and Pfohl, (1993)

² The term *Ushi no Koku Mairi* is derived from the *Onmyōdō*, a Japanese esoteric system of cosmologies originating in China and brought to Japan during the sixth century. Within this system certain animals and items in nature correspond with various qualities of time, date and direction, designating their level of malevolence or benevolence. In this system, *Ushi no Koku Mairi* is believed to designate a time period between 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m., corresponding to the animal signs of the cow (*ushi*) and the tiger (*tora*). As the layout of a 12-hour clock simulates the cosmic order of the *Onmyōdō*, the upper right-hand quadrant

as the practice of visiting a shrine between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 a.m. with the intention of casting a curse. As a syncretic product of Japanese folklore, quasi-religious ritual, popular culture and advances in digital technology, practitioners and clients alike have adopted beliefs in certain practices from the pre-modern tradition of *Ushi no Koku Mairi*.

Using the internet as a proxy for casting curses is nothing new. For example, “PinStruck.com,” an American-based online cursing service offers nineteen different curses and a visual aid of a “virtual voodoo doll” riddled with pins and conveying a quirky email messages designed to communicate some form of discontent (Cohen, 2001). According to its founder, Tyson Liotta, PinStruck.com sends some two to three thousand curses daily, a frequency which would suggest that this type of execration is, indeed, something of a popular current in the culture of the virtual world.

Building upon George Ritzer’s (2010) theoretical framework for interpreting re-enchantment through spectacle, this article illustrates the re-enchantment of folkloric cursing through cyber communication. According to Ritzer,

“The use of advanced technology to create spectacle is already with us in various realms such as video and online games and on much of the Internet [...] because they exist in an immaterial world, the spectacles are free of material limits. This means that one is much freer to create and to experience a spectacle than in the material world. Techniques to create spectacles-simulation, space, time and implosion are infinitely greater on the Internet than they are in the material world”. (Ritzer, 2010, p. 210)

As a case study in re-enchantment, cyber execration demonstrates the re-appropriation of an aged folkloric practice that has escaped secularization and gained several enchanting features.

Today, *Ushi no Koku Mairi* is used as a backdrop for cyber execration and embedded among websites marketing cursing services. The websites alone provide dazzling spectacles illustrating practitioner services, surrounded by technological gimmicks such as mobile graphics, flashing lights and links that spur quirky sound-bites all of which were absent when *Ushi no Koku Mairi* was first practiced in pre-modern Japan. In this way, digital technology provides a certain amount of marvel and mystery for potential clients to browse; bemused of course by the imagery and audio of lights, sound and action.

between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 are also representative of the northeast direction. In combination, these times, symbols and directions represent a dimension where malevolent spirits roam free.

In this way *Ushi no Koku Mairi* may be said to be a rare phenomenon that moves from an irrational venture associated with the supernatural, toward a more rational discourse through the use of online communication. That is to say that execration in and of itself is rather irrational ; it involves invoking supernatural forces for the purpose of having others experiences misfortune. When such execration takes place over the internet, everything from the agreement between the client and the practitioner to the execution of the execration becomes a rational process. Although some social theorists would suggest that modern society is increasingly producing examples of disenchantment through rational processes, I argue that cyber execration actually demonstrates the reverse: re-enchantment is generated though rational means.

In this article I discuss the disenchantment of cursing and then illustrate this practice of executing curses over the internet. I then argue that the re-enchantment of this enterprise is facilitated through what Ritzer has described as the three techniques of spectacle: (1) simulation, (2) implosion and (3) manipulation of time and space.

2. Pre-modern Cursing and Disenchantment

Although the exact origin of *Ushi no Koku Mairi* is unknown, classical Japanese literature would suggest that this practice may be traced back to an eclectic mixture of rituals loosely associated within Shintoism, developed between the late eighth and fifteenth centuries. The *Heike Monogatari*, an epic tale of war and control of twelfth century Japan, provides at least one account of execration. As the story is commonly told, a female seeking revenge for her husband's adulterous indiscretions, travelled to the *Kibune*³ shrine in Kyoto with the intention of casting a curse on her spouse. After appealing to a shrine attendant, the woman is instructed to disguise herself as a demon, shrouding herself in red and fashioning an iron crown adorned with burning candles. Intent on completing the curse, this woman finds that her husband has prepared himself for the curse through similar instruction, crafting dolls designed to thwart his wife's original curse.

In this way, the *Heike Monogatari* establishes some discerning features about cursing in the pre-modern era. The actions of both the vengeful female and her spouse provided a rudimentary understanding of how cursing can be executed an

³Although the *Kibune* shrine was not established for execration, due to an increase in references to *Ushi no Koku Mairi* within Japanese popular culture, the aspect of cursing has become a dominant theme preceding most other representations of its physical locale. Many people have used the *Kibune* shrine as a place for wishing good fortune upon others.

historical account straddling fact and fiction that serves as a foundation for references to cursing in the future.⁴

As a practice associated with magic and superstition, *Ushi no Koku Mairi* would have been vulnerable to the gradual secularization of Japan. Though writing about much of the West's development of rationalization, the work of Max Weber is regarded as an important departure in the discussion of this notion of secularization. For Weber, bureaucratic rationalization, and by extension secularization, were key organizational structures that would eventually diminish the legitimacy of pre-modern enchantment such as magic and superstition. Loosely equating bureaucracy with rationality, Weber writes:

“From a purely technical point of view, a bureaucracy is capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency, and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings”. (Weber, 1968, p. 223)

Indeed, through the use of the metaphor of living life in an “iron cage,” Weber cautiously conveyed his concern for a world immersed in bureaucratic organizational structures.⁵ Though Weber's work is still quite relevant to current conditions of rationalization, contemporary social theorists have adapted his writing to account for recent developments of rationalization within the twenty-first century.

In his now popular “McDonaldization” thesis, Ritzer (2004) argued that a great deal of the culture of consumption has been subjected to disenchantment through rigid rationality. Drawing upon the Weber's critique of bureaucratic systems, Ritzer argues that modern society and the culture of consumption is entrenched within four components of rationalization including efficiency, calculability, predictability and

⁴ *Ushi no Koku Mairi* has been featured several times within Japanese popular culture. Motion pictures depicting females that seek revenge for their husbands' infidelities are particularly common; drawing further connections to the *Heike Monogatari*. For films, see Komatsu (1995) and for literature see Okano (1994).

⁵ Weber's discussion on authority structures (1958) also has implications that figure into the theme of disenchantment. Weber distinguished between three types of authority structures: (1) traditional authority, the rule that is legitimized by a claim of some historic connection to a lineage of authority, or a said connection to a supernatural entity that legitimizes this rule; (2) legal-rational authority whereby rule is established in conjunction with legal agreements and regulations; and (3) charismatic authority where a leader exhibits some extraordinary legitimacy over his or her followers. A brief survey of social currents associated with authority in the twenty-first century would clearly illustrate that traditional and charismatic authority structures are less prominent. This would suggest, in a general sense, that a de-emphasis of this type of rule decreases the experience and expectation of enchantment sustained by these two types authority, so capable of engendering the unanticipated. See Weber (1958).

control through non-human technology (2004, pp.12-25). Using the fast-food industry as a general model for of rationalization, Ritzer demonstrates how the combination of these components sustains the rational process. However, Ritzer goes onto argue that it is this very process of rationalization that generates irrationalities.

Despite the persuasive notion that rationalization suppresses enchantment, there are exceptions. That is, there are systems that reverse this scheme and reveal the rationalities of irrational systems; in effect instances of re-enchantment in a world riddled with formally organized rules and regulations. Although these examples are not exclusive to the internet, the cyber world is one place where disenchantment and re-enchantment converge. Rationalization certainly thrives within this virtual world, as it operates upon stringent systems of protocol and technological nuances. Yet the spectacle of digital technology and its ability to elicit wonder and imagination has the potential to re-enchant.

3. *Ushi no Koku Mairi* as Cyber Execration

Throughout Japan there are dozens of online execration sites.⁶ However, for the sake of confidentiality and brevity, I have compiled several commonalities among various websites, creating an illustrative composite of cyber execration. These commonalities include a description of both the prices and services offered, an explanation of how practitioners execute these services, as well as a section dedicated to outcomes through customer reviews or efficacy rates.

Both prices and services are generally listed in an accessible fashion on the welcoming page of each website. These prices generally depend on the complexity of the curse and may range anywhere from ¥5,000 to ¥550,000 yen.⁷ For example, the least expensive curses offering “light sicknesses,” inflicting “shame and embarrassment,” or causing “minor injuries,” will cost between ¥5,000 and ¥100,000 yen. More expensive curses such as “severely damaging an individual’s relationship,” or even causing “death” will range between ¥30,000 to ¥550,000 yen. According to one site, death is such a serious matter that if they are commissioned to

⁶ Operators of cyber execration websites are particularly private and unresponsive to my requests for interviews. Thus, out of respect for the privacy of these subjects, I have studied these websites by emphasizing the perspective of a potential client. However, in attempt to illustrate this phenomenon, I have randomly selected several websites that I then combined to form a general composite which bring together their most apparent commonalities.

⁷ To provide an idea of what this may cost in Europe, in the current currency conversion this range would be equivalent to €48.00 to €5,251.00 Euro.

execute this request they must charge the maximum price; as if their services fail the curse may render adverse effects upon the practitioners themselves.⁸

After a client has chosen and paid for a service, the practitioners then require the client to provide a personal artifact belonging to the individual to be cursed. This, according to several websites, ensures the effectiveness of the curse. Artifacts include single strands or locketts of hair, photographs, and personal information such as names, birthdates, and, in one case, medications. Following this correspondence between the client and practitioner, the curse is in queue to be cast.

As described on the websites, these rituals will vary according to both the type of curse that is commissioned and their historical interpretation of *Ushi no Koku Mairi*. In most rituals, the practitioners will first craft an effigy known as *waraningyo*, or straw doll that represents the individual to be cursed. This *waraningyo* will then act as a recipient of the verbal curse and assume all effects generated by the subsequent ritual.

According to the cyber execration websites, depending on the price of the curse, practitioners may make an actual journey to the shrine or simply organize the ritual around an in-house shrine erected at the company's worksite. The practitioner will then prepare for the cursing ritual by gowning themselves in white robes and fashioning a crown of burning candles. Additionally, practitioners will powder their faces in white makeup, apply dark-red lipstick and then fasten a mirror around their chest.⁹ The cursing ritual will then begin between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m., at which time the practitioner will summon a demon, cast a verbal curse toward the victim, and then nail the *waraningyo* to the northeast side of a standing cedar tree.¹⁰ The details of the actual verbalized curses are not revealed on the websites; perhaps in an effort to retain the secrecy of the ritual and necessitate the use of a practitioner's services.

After the curse is cast the client will receive an email confirming that the ritual has been performed. At this point, it is the client's responsibility to report any results back to the practitioner. If indeed there are successful results, the clients are

⁸ In Japan the legalities for making such statements or offering outcomes such as death are rather unclear. Some sites reassure customers that it is difficult for law enforcement to make connections between cursing and outcomes.

⁹ Much of the practitioner's appearance during the ritual conforms to artistic depictions of the vengeful female character mentioned in the *Heike Monogatari*. Some accessories, such as the mirror and use of red-lipstick, however, are popular adaptations found in modern films and comic books.

¹⁰ In the case of an in-house ritual, a severed piece of cedar is used.

then encouraged to post their reviews on a designated section of the company's website.

Although censored in consideration of confidentiality, these reviews are then displayed as a marketing tool for the company. Many companies will tabulate these successful cases and express them in percentages as "efficacy rates" for customers to view.

4. Cyber Execration as a Rational System

Japan is a society thoroughly rooted in rational systems. A brief survey of some of its more popular reputation on the world stage illustrates this rationality: efficient "just-in-time" manufacturing; advanced transportation systems operating on the principle of predictability; the ubiquity of its "cash economy" based upon calculability; and its image as the global forerunner of robotics and artificial intelligence that ultimately smack of control through non-human technology. In a society such as this, it is hardly surprising that the cultural production of Japan's virtual world would be anything less than rational.

As a portion of such cultural production, the practice of *Ushi no Koku Mairi* in the form of cyber execration has also proven to be a highly rationalized system. Indeed, all four of Ritzer's components of rationalization can be found within cyber execration.

Efficiency may be viewed first and foremost within the use of computer technology itself. As an optimal mechanism for processing information, the computer provides a medium through which clients can go from wanting to cast a curse to commissioning a practitioner to do so in a relatively short period of time. There is no need to venture outside of one's residence to a sacred shrine, deal with learning the protocol of an effective curse or even expose oneself to the possibility of being seen. Instead, the curse may be cast from the comforts of one's residence, entrusted to the operators of the website and thus remain protected from possible shame and embarrassment of being caught. In short, the immediacy of casting a curse, the recessed distance between the client and the practitioner, transference of responsibility and the maintenance of confidentiality all serve to produce a highly efficient experience.

Cyber execration is also highly calculable. Curses are assigned particular values based upon the seriousness of the curse. That is, harmful curses will cost more than less harmful curses. In this way, the choice of curse may not necessarily be dependent upon the intentions of the client, but may instead be based upon the value assigned to a particular curse. In other words, the price of the curse, not the curse itself, is much more associated with a rational decision of being able to afford

a given curse, versus an irrational decision where money may not be an option, all of which are ventures of calculability.

The predictability of cyber execration may be viewed through the marketing feature of posting both customer reviews and efficacy ratings. These customer reviews are always written as confirmations of the successfulness of curses, providing potential clients with data for making their decisions about which website to commission, as well as which curse to cast. Moreover, the efficacy rates, often presented in clear and concise tables, provide equally informative data for potential clients. A brief review of either of these features reveals highly predictable rates of success.

Finally, cyber execration has the potential to control clients through non-human technology. For example, the lists of curse options among the websites surveyed were generally consistent across all companies. That is, options for cursing are relatively similar across cyber execration websites, and one can expect then to receive the same type of product regardless of the business they choose to commission. Yet these options are also presented as composites of various curses, and thus there is no real room for commissioning a particular kind of curse. Instead, the client's decisions are confined to general categories of curses, leaving no room for personalized requests. In this way, the scope of curses offered is controlled through the limited list of curses advertised.

5. Re-Enchantment and *Ushi no Koku Mairi*

At the center of this notion of "re-enchantment" is the argument that an historic process of rational organization has dissolved the enchanting features found within pre-modern human interaction (Gauchet, 1997). Thus, it would follow that re-enchantment denotes the re-emergence of these enchanting features through a reversal of the rationalization process.

The mechanism through which enchantment dissolves is associated with secularization. Given secularization's apparent dichotomous relationship with the sacred, enchantment, then, is often viewed as product of religious phenomena. Yet exactly how secularization operates, its connection to rationalization, or even how wide-spread it has become, all remain departures of various debates (Partridge, 2004).

Indeed, some have developed rather complex typologies of secularization (Woodhead & Heelas, 2000); while others have focused on the depletion of items necessary to prevent secularization (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985); and still others have delineated the meaning of secularization as it is understood globally (Bruce, 2002).

For this article, however, Ritzer's (2004 ; 2010) application of Weberian theses are particularly germane to this discussion.

As one of the more prominent theorists of rationalization and its relationship to enchantment and disenchantment, Weber is often credited with providing the foundation for each of these concepts. In a rather pessimistic view, Weber argued that the overall process of a rationality emerging at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries would reduce magic to a merely irrational product of the past, severely undercutting its legitimacy in a previously enchanted world.

Although it would follow that rationalization would undermine enchantment, Ritzer (2010) has, in some cases, argued the contrary, noting that rationality and enchantment can actually co-exist. That is, the quality of enchantment, or re-enchantment, does not belie the presence of this rigid rationality. Ritzer elaborated on this point in his study of consumer culture, whereby the magical features of accommodating consumers' requests must be both sustainable, as well systematically coordinated to somehow elicit this enchantment. As Ritzer has noted :

“The cathedrals of consumption are not only enchanted but also highly rationalized. As they attract more consumers, their enchantment must be reproduced over and over on demand. Furthermore, branches of the successfully enchanted settings are opened across the nation and even the world with the result that essentially the same magic must be reproduced in a wide range of locations. To accomplish this, the magic has to be systematized so that it can be easily re-created from one time or place to another”. (Ritzer, 2010, p.8)

In this way, and contrary to a conventional understanding of the relationship between rationality and enchantment, these concepts are not necessarily in strict opposition to each other. Perhaps due to the fact that most consumers are not the least bit interested in the formal definitions of enchantment and re-enchantment, they may execute their consumption without ever questioning the systematic rationality that merchants depend upon to control the sale of their goods and services.

For example, Ritzer draws a parallel comparison between a discount retailer warehouse and Weber's metaphor of the iron cage. He describes this warehouse in quite literal terms as a “cold, spare and inelegant” place to shop, all too similar to the image of an iron cage (Ritzer, 2010, p. 93). Yet even in this highly rationalized setting, enchantment appears to be manifested in the perspectives of modern

consumers that marvel at the abundance of discounted items. They gaze at the optical illusion of an endless ceiling, towering over these products available for purchase. And they also wonder about the ingenuity that such an operation must involve.

The virtual world and the consumers that shop within it are also embedded in highly rationalized systems. Online consumption could not seem more rational: locate an online store, search for a product, pay for it, and then await your purchase.

As part of this online consumption, cyber execration extends this rational system. However, despite the rationalization involved in serving clients and maintaining these internet ventures, the *Ushi no Koku Mairi* websites are also re-enchanting. In other words, where cyber execration features a number of rationalized qualities, these qualities have generated the very non-rationalized features of enchantment said to be threatened by rationalization.

The characteristics of re-enchantment that I focus on here are all associated with spectacle. In his seminal study titled *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord (1967) viewed spectacle as a force through which rationalization is concealed, that is, spectacle is a strategy used by merchants to draw in both customers and profit, without revealing it as such. Today, spectacle thrives within internet commerce, exemplified by savvy graphic designs and innovative techniques that allow customers to shop with ease.

Ritzer's analysis of spectacle focuses on three techniques that have evolved from a "new means of consumption" which include simulation, implosion and the manipulation of time and space (2010, p.118). As I will illustrate here, for cyber execration these three techniques serve to re-enchant the practice of *Ushi no Koku Mairi*.

Building upon the work of Jean Baudrillard (1983), Ritzer refers to "simulation" as a condition whereby humans have abandoned "a more genuine, more authentic social world," and allowed it to be replaced by a replication, however so imaginary (2010, p. 103). Cyber execration, in this sense, provides a simulative experience of actually casting a curse.

To cast a curse, or any type of invocation of insult toward another, often involves a form of courage to speak out and a preparation for possible retribution. Due to the confidentiality of these cyber execration websites, these human characteristics are implicitly unnecessary. Instead, the cursing of another individual through a proxy service over the internet simulates the real process of cursing, yet still has the potential to provide the client with a sense of satisfaction. In this way, cyber execration is a simulation of actual cursing and may attract clients by marketing an

absence of retribution and the human characteristics of having to experience the anxiety of performing face-to-face.

The second technique of “implosion” is defined by Ritzer as the “disintegration or disappearance of boundaries as formally differentiated entities collapse in on each other” (2010, p. 118). For the most part, Ritzer has applied this concept of implosion to the convergence of hybridized venues of consumption such as places where one can eat, gamble, shop and view entertainment with considerable simultaneity. Cyber execration, however, may be said to implode along the lines of dealing with real life adversity and commissioning the operators of the *Ushi no Koku Mairi* websites to execute their will.

To commission cyber execration dissolves the separation between the real and the unreal. That is, to be skeptical of superstitious practices involved in cursing does not necessarily preclude one’s wishes to invoke harm upon another individual. However, with cyber execration, negotiating an agreement through real computer technology about the intentions of harming someone through supernatural means blurs the notions of reality and fantasy. These two seemingly dichotomous notions implode together in a venture that can be thought of as both cursing on the one hand and simply interacting through technology on the other.

Finally, Ritzer advances the idea that time and space can be manipulated for the benefit of spectacle. This manipulation is illustrated by the form of recessed ritual that need not take place in the real world or even real time, but instead as a part of virtual time and space. In other words, all of the interaction involved in simulation or implosion do not need to be associated with the real historical foundations of *Ushi no Koku Mairi*, but instead, may be as timeless and evading of space as one may want to imagine them to be.

Though some of the practices and imagery mentioned in such works as the *Heike Monogatari* can be found in the current practice of *Ushi no Koku Mairi*, the overall fashion in which cursing is executed is drastically different. Yet the great lengths that marketers of cyber execration go to in order to make the connection between past and present, effectively collapse time into something that is both linear and manageable for clients to consume.

In addition, the pre-modern ritual of *Ushi no Koku Mairi* was often enacted by the individual seeking vengeance and coordinated per the advice of the Shinto practitioner. The cyber execration, by contrast, is enacted by a practitioner associated with the website ; keeping the client’s involvement to a minimum and reducing the otherwise vital notion of space. In this way, the clients entrust the outcome of their intentions to the technological capacities of those operating the website. Thus, the notion of relying upon digital technology to deal with human

adversity, as opposed to actual human interaction (or even avoidance of interaction), is a drastic deviation from *Ushi no Koku Mairi*'s origins. Yet this deviation is also enacted in service of expanding and contracting space.

In a combination of spectacle, simulation, implosion and the manipulation of time and space provide limitless options for clients to experience both rationalization and re-enchantment. In short, when cursing is practiced through cyber technology, rationalization and re-enchantment are in full flux—neither of which necessarily supersedes the other.

6. Conclusion

The practice of *Ushi no Koku Mairi* in the form cyber execration is a rationalized means of providing irrational ends. Its use of efficient, calculable, predictable and controlling non-human technology would suggest that its enchanting features have been eliminated through rationalization. However, this case study has illustrated that as a product of virtual reality, this social phenomenon can be simultaneously rational as well as re-enchanting through techniques that foster spectacle.

Building on the work of George Ritzer's studies of consumer culture, this article has argued that concepts of spectacle, implosion and the manipulation of time and space have the ability to re-enchant the otherwise disenchanting practice of cursing. Unlike the practice of simply casting a curse, cyber execration operates within the virtual world where clients may take advantage of the features of online detachment including anonymity, convenience and the transfer of responsibility necessary to carry out the cursing ritual. The distancing of this virtual venture is a simulation of the cursing found in face-to-face interaction.

These notions of cursing through *human* interaction and cursing through *virtual* interaction are also blurred through an implosion of the trust in computerized technology and the belief in magic and superstition. As neither rationalized technology nor irrational magic and superstition are discernable after this implosion, partaking in this venture might imply the investment in either or neither simultaneously. In this way, one can dabble in rationality or irrationality without ever really drawing a definitive line between them.

The manipulation of time and space are ubiquitous throughout cyber execration. Not only are pre-modern and contemporary practices collapsed into one point of reference, the pace at which a curse is said to be administered and the immediacy for which results are said to be returned, offers an attractive, though not necessarily accurate feature to online cursing.

The use of cyber execration also manipulates space. Agreements negotiated over the internet are imparted with a certain amount of creative license for both the practitioner and the client. Where the Shinto practitioner of the pre-modern practice may have had to both account for human error and confirm the outcomes of his role in a much more explicit fashion, today's practitioner of cyber execration are only responsible for confirming that they have actually cast the curse. In reality, the actual outcome is not confined to space, but instead expands to the far reaches of the imagination.

Thus, the re-enchantment of *Ushi no Koku Mairi* is generated by the spectacle of unlimited possibilities; largely due to the indecipherability authenticity and replication, the blurring of rational and irrational methods, as well as the manipulation of time and space.

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