

## **Title: The Eras of Our Lives: Hauntology, Fabricated Nostalgia, and the Paradox of Memory in the Digital Age**

Carla Ganito, Cátia Ferreira, Patrícia Tavares, João Simão

CECC, Universidade Católica Portuguesa

**Abstract:** This paper explores the intersection of collective memory and contemporary musical consumption, examining how music acts as a vessel for both personal identity and social cohesion. Music-evoked autobiographical memories are characterized by a "reminiscence bump," where songs from adolescence evoke heightened emotional responses and vivid recollections. Using the cultural phenomenon of Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour" as a case study, this research investigates how live performance functions as a "trip down memory lane," allowing audiences to relive distinct developmental chapters of their lives. However, this paper argues that contemporary musical memory is complicated by "retro culture" and the digital age, creating a specific "generation unit" of fans who experience "vicarious cultural memories" of pre-biographical eras they never lived through.

Drawing on the concept of "hauntology"—a paradoxical longing for a lost future—this study analyzes how digital technologies blur temporal boundaries. While digital platforms provide unprecedented access to archival music and fan videos, they simultaneously encourage "fabricated nostalgia" and "timbral nostalgia". Furthermore, the paper addresses the cognitive paradox of "post-concert amnesia," where the high arousal of the "experiencing self" overrides the "remembering self," resulting in a fragmentation of the very memories fans seek to encode. For example, Taylor Swift actively fosters "fabricated nostalgia" by releasing albums with exclusive material content and aesthetics. This strategy allows fans to engage in "timbral nostalgia," using material media to anchor their emotional connections to the music in an increasingly digital world. This aligns with the broader behavior of fans using material objects to anchor memories, similar to how concertgoers might rely on physical tokens or "reminiscence bumps" to solidify memories that might otherwise be lost to "post-concert amnesia".

Drawing on a qualitative analysis of 171 fan-generated videos collected internationally between 2024 and 2025; this study investigates how fans mobilize "affective resonance" to translate personal nostalgia into collective identity. Ultimately, this research posits that music listening today is a negotiation between the technological determination of memory and the desire for an authentic "structure of feeling" in an era defined by retromania.