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Manly Martyrs and Pitiful Women: Negotiating Race, Gender, and Power in Salem
Witchcraft Tourism Since 1880

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Sarah Elizabeth Junod

September 2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Manly Martyrs and Pitiful Women: Negotiating Race, Gender, and Power in Salem
Witchcraft Tourism Since 1880

by

Sarah Elizabeth Junod

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, September 2020
Dr. Molly McGarry, Chairperson

This dissertation considers the ways in which tourism associated with the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 have represented the intersections of gender, race, and class since the nineteenth century. Representations of classed masculinity, femininity, whiteness, Blackness, and indigeneity engage the perceived threats to, and the threats of, white patriarchy in the face of shifting racial and gender roles. This analysis utilizes travel guides, souvenirs, travel diaries, popular histories, television shows, newspapers, brochures, travel reviews, and marketing materials from the nineteenth century through the present to reconstruct dominant tourist narratives of the Salem Witch Trials. Investigations of contemporary tourism also utilize site visits and participant observation at tourist attractions.

Interpretations of the trials reflect the assumptions that predominantly white, middle-class Americans have had towards problems of authority and identity at particular

moments in history. The Salem witch trials disrupt ideas of New England exceptionalism and undermined the mainstream public history work of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that asserted white patriarchal dominance and facilitated middle class bourgeois norms and values. Therefore, tracing the evolution of discourses in witchcraft tourism afford a useful opportunity for considering the fractures, ambivalences, and reconciliations present in New Englanders' constructions of a usable past and identity. Tourist narratives have largely served to legitimize white patriarchal authority in the present, evolving in response to shifting attitudes towards identity and authority and perceived moments of social upheaval such as the Civil Rights Movement. In seeking to valorize bourgeois masculinity, however, travel boosters have often marginalized their treatment of the accused women and interpreted colonial femininity in ways that validated patriarchal gender values or constructed issues of colonialism and misogyny as problems of the past. These narratives also scapegoated an enslaved indigenous woman, Tituba, for instigating the witch trials with superstitions from the Caribbean, thereby shifting blame for the witchcraft panic from Anglo-American culture and intellectualism to an unruly woman of color extrinsic to New England.

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Introduction

The Salem Witch Trials permeate American popular culture. Featured in television shows from the 1960s series *Bewitched* to the 1990s show *Charmed*, as well as in literature from the nineteenth century to the present, the trials have long been used as a shared cultural metaphor for persecution and fanaticism. Academics are not exempt from this fascination with Salem, and scholars have produced a massive historiography seeking to explain the causes of the events of 1692, and/or to determine why, or whether, Salem was exceptional to New England witchcraft. This dissertation will analyze the witch trials through the lens of public history. Public history offers a unique framework for studies of the events in Salem by allowing historians to trace shifting understandings of Salem witchcraft, and to explain why social memories of 1692 resonate at particular historic moments. Furthermore, the study of public memory allows for inter-disciplinary questions raised by museum and tourism studies, display, performance theory, media studies, and American studies that make my project useful for an array of scholars. Americans have attached particular narratives to the witch trials that allow them to make meaning of contemporary events, comment on cultural values and ideas of national progress, and work through social anxieties by engaging with a historical crisis.

This dissertation intervenes in this literature by analyzing the ways in which public histories of Salem witchcraft engage the issues of gender and colonialism that informed the course of the witch trials of 1692 from the nineteenth century to the present. Witchcraft tourist sites use discourses of victims and victimization to delimit norms of gendered behavior, particularly as it intersects with race and class. Representations of

these norms reflect an ambivalence and unease about threats to, and the threats of, racialized and gendered power. In turn, touristic narratives – as represented in travel guides, museums, and walking tours – variously reify or challenge assumptions about authority, power, religion, and codes of gendered, raced, and classed decency at particular historical moments as well as the value Americans place on those at the axes of these identities.

Salem Witchcraft

The Salem Witch Trials are unusually well-documented, and historians typically agree on a basic narrative of events. Broadly, the witch trials began in January 1692, when nine-year-old Betty Parris and her eleven-year-old cousin, Abigail Williams, began to exhibit erratic behavior. Betty's father, Reverend Samuel Parris consulted with doctors and colleagues and ultimately concluded that the girls had been bewitched. Shortly thereafter, their neighbor, a white Englishwoman named Mary Sibley, tasked the Parris' slaves, John Indian and his wife Tituba, with carrying out an act of counter-magic, namely, a ritual that allowed people to break or "counter" a malefic act of witchcraft. On Sibley's orders, John and Tituba prepared "witch-cakes," made of the girls' urine and rye. When fed to a dog and set alight, the children would be able to see the one who bewitched them and identify them to the community. Though Parris condemned the use of a witch-cake as diabolic itself, the children were suddenly able to identify the ones afflicting them, seemingly confirming the presence of witchcraft for the people of Salem Village. Other young girls began exhibiting symptoms of witchcraft. Abigail and Betty

accused Tituba of bewitching them, while other afflicted girls identified Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne of tormenting them. Judges Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne investigated, and eventually pressed Tituba into confessing that she, Good, and Osborne had made a covenant with Satan.¹

Sensationalist narratives in tourism and popular culture since the nineteenth century have often portrayed Tituba as African, at the center of a circle of teenage girls practicing an African form of witchcraft, conducting dances or rituals in the woods. However, Tituba was indigenous, likely Arawak, and brought to Barbados from South America after being enslaved.² Samuel Parris seems to have purchased her there and brought her with his family to Massachusetts as a young woman, likely placing her somewhere in her late twenties at the time of the witch trials.³ As historian Elaine Breslaw has shown, while Tituba seems to have drawn upon English, indigenous, and African cultural influences in shaping her testimony upon being accused of witchcraft in 1692, there is no historical evidence for the clandestine fortune-telling circles and voodoo so often attributed to her.⁴ The acts of magic attributed to Tituba in seventeenth-century sources – the witch-cake and diabolic conspiracies with the Devil – came from Anglo-American beliefs. As historian David Hall demonstrates, colonial New Englanders believed in a complex web of supernatural and religious forces at work in the world, and many could easily reconcile the use of folk beliefs, superstitious rituals, and acts of

¹ Benjamin Ray, *Satan and Salem: The Witch-Hunt Crisis of 1692* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 15-43.

² Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 5-38.

³ Breslaw, *Tituba*, 39.

⁴ For analysis of Tituba's confession and origins, see Breslaw, *Tituba* and Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 33-43.

outright magic with Puritan faith.⁵ Indeed, no documents from 1692 describe the children of the Parris household practicing illicit fortunetelling tricks at all. These notions seem to derive from a reference in the *Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*, written in 1697 by Reverend John Hale, a resident of nearby Beverly, Massachusetts, who observed the Salem Witch Trials. He wrote that one unnamed afflicted girl – whom Hale does not identify with the Parris household – had performed a bit of fortunetelling to discern the identity of her future husband.⁶

Tourists often arrive in Salem seeking a particular answer for why the 1692 witch panic occurred. Since the 1970s, attractions and travel guides have provided an explanation by blaming the afflicted children for willfully deluding their community and making accusations against innocent neighbors out of boredom and a desire for attention.⁷ While six afflicted girls did provide the most critical testimony in the Salem Witch Trials, historians have noted that adult men and women testified experiencing bewitchment also, and that the adult male head of the household filed legal complaints on behalf of their afflicted children.⁸ Scholars such as John Demos have also shown that the Salem Witch Trials were singular in New England witchcraft for the prominent roles played by young women; typically, young men formed the largest group of bewitched

⁵ David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1990).

⁶ Emerson Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14, 108.

⁷ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸ Benjamin Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 44-48.

persons in witchcraft cases, followed by adult women. Why Salem would be so anomalous in this regard is unclear.⁹

Scholars have also sought to explain why people exhibited signs of bewitchment at all, with explanations ranging from psychological turmoil, deceit on the part of the afflicted children, or, most often, some combination thereof. John Demos describes possible psychological factors that might have contributed to the children's afflictions when read against a religious-cultural context that took the existence of the Devil and his agents as an absolute reality. He posits that Puritans projected disturbing traits within themselves onto the figure of the witch. Young women in particular faced intense pressure because, psychologically, adolescents typically form an independent adult identity over the course of their teenage years but, given that seventeenth-century social norms already determined their future roles as mothers and wives, they could not fully negotiate their own identities. Through fits of affliction, the bewitched girls could enact typically forbidden behaviors and physical autonomy while still conforming to Puritan beliefs. As will be shown, tourist scripts since the 1970s often present a highly simplified, somewhat ahistorical version of this analysis, claiming that the afflicted girls were simply bored and looking to get away from the drudgery of their lives as future housewives by placing themselves at the center of the witchcraft crisis.

This dissertation follows the work of Benjamin Ray for understandings of the interplay between the afflicted, magistrates and ministers, and other adult community

⁹ John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 155-210. See also Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 10.

members.¹⁰ He posits that the religious, political, legal, and social leaders of the region took up the afflicted children's testimony that a network of witches worked to advance a diabolical attack against religious faith in New England to advance their own ends.¹¹ Notably, judges most often utilized the testimony of a few bewitched children from the families of leading church members who led the calls that the community and the church was under attack. By displaying the children's bewitchment before the courts, ministers and magistrates legitimized accusations and their own court proceedings. A few men, particularly Thomas Putnam, may have pushed witchcraft accusations against non-members of the church. As noted by Ray and historian Richard Latner, by the late seventeenth century New Englanders were divided over how restrictive admittance to church membership should be. Salem Town's church had been relatively permissive, following the "Halfway Covenant" which extended partial church membership to those who had been baptized but not yet fully covenanted through the reception of God's grace, attested to before one's congregation. Parris and supporters such as Thomas Putnam in Salem Village, however, sought to purify their congregation and restore vigorous Puritan faith through strict standards for church membership and evangelical preaching.¹² Ray notes that Putnam recorded many of the court documents, repeating a few key phrases throughout that were particularly potent for gaining convictions, which also raises doubts about how much of the afflicted children shaped their own testimony, and how much was

¹⁰ Benjamin Ray, "The Salem Witch Mania: Recent Scholarship and American History Textbooks," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010), 45.

¹¹ See Ray, *Satan and Salem* and Ray, "The Salem Witch Mania."

¹² Richard Latner, "'Here Are No Newtters:' Witchcraft and Religious Discord in Salem Village and Andover," *New England Quarterly* 79 (2006), 92-122.

shaped for them.¹³ Mary Beth Norton also registers a number of juridical irregularities, such as interviewing the afflicted collectively rather than individually, perhaps allowing them the chance to collude in their testimony. Court officials also permitted members of the community to observe the initial hearings. These audiences could interject with their responses to the proceedings, and, particularly in instances where magistrates were frustrated in gaining a conviction or a confession from the defendant, they permitted the audience to interject with further evidence, claims to have been witnesses, and their own fits of bewitchment. These spectators spread gossip about the presence of a witchcraft conspiracy at work in their region, rapidly escalating the geographic spread of the trials and their intensity.¹⁴ Given the scale of the witchcraft panic in 1692, it seems most credible that some combination of psychological distress and sincere credulity in witchcraft, pressure and coaching from adults, and some fakery operated within the group of afflicted children collectively and individually over the course of the trials.

Tituba's confession, as well as the affliction of more girls, kicked off a series of further accusations and investigations that would encompass the entire region, leading to accusations of at least 169 people, the executions of nineteen men and women, and the pressing to death of Giles Cory for refusing to enter a plea of innocent or guilty. While Good and Osborne had quarrelsome reputations and poor standing in their community, the girls also accused highly respectable individuals, including Rebecca Nurse and the Puritan Minister George Burroughs, formerly of Salem but residing in Maine in 1692.

¹³ Ray, "The Salem Witch Mania," 56.

¹⁴ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 25-60.

Governor William Phips convened a special court, the Court of Oyer and Terminer, to try the accused witches. Executions began on June 10th with the death of Bridget Bishop. The trials ended in May 1693.¹⁵

Salem Witchcraft Historiography

The Salem Witch Trials were highly unusual by the standards of the seventeenth century. Trials rarely occurred, and when they did, they typically only involved one or two individuals who had been involved in “deeply personal” conflicts with their communities.¹⁶ As a result, scholars have produced volumes of literature seeking to explain the origins of Salem witchcraft and why the panic escalated to the scale as it did, and developing a broader understanding of witchcraft in New England.¹⁷ Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum’s *Salem Possessed* is the foundational study of Salem witchcraft. They argue that the witch trials grew out of a conflict between the modernizing, more

¹⁵ See, for instance, Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 14-42. The court records and many other associated documents have been digitized at the University of Virginia, <http://saalem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html>.

¹⁶ John Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 4-13.

¹⁷ For witchcraft as the result of social divisions, see Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974). For political origins, see Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*. For treatments of Salem in the context of New England witchcraft, see John Demos, *Entertaining Satan* and Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17th Century Massachusetts* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts, 1984). For witchcraft and folk belief and scientific thinking, see Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Mary Beth Norton argues that Salem witchcraft originated in frontier warfare. Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*. For studies of Tituba, see Breslaw, *Tituba*, and Chadwick Hansen. “The Metamorphosis of Tituba, or Why American Intellectuals Can’t Tell an Indian Witch from a Negro,” *New England Quarterly* 47 (1974), 3-12. The major feminist interpretation of Salem witchcraft is Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987). Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) is the other major feminist interpretation. Most recently, Benjamin Ray has argued that the witch trials resulted from a combination of all of the above factors in Ray, *Satan and Salem*.

secular, and more economically prosperous Salem Town (present day Salem) and Salem Village (present day Danvers).¹⁸ Mary Beth Norton's work has also been influential. She reads the witch trials against years of warfare against the Abenaki on the Maine frontier, arguing that the English interpreted this violence and the presence of witches as an interrelated diabolical conspiracy against the godly men and women of New England.¹⁹ Most recently, Benjamin Ray has argued that the witch panic of 1692 derived from a confluence of religious, political, and economic tensions in New England, and that a few leading men of in the area took up the afflicted children's claims of bewitchment to encourage ministers and magistrates to aggressively act against suspected witches.²⁰

Over a decade elapsed between Boyer and Nissenbaum's monograph and the first major feminist analysis of Salem witchcraft by Carol Karlsen, coinciding with the rise of feminist scholarship in the 1980s.²¹ She found that historians should see witchcraft "as a deeply ambivalent but violent struggle within women as well as an equally ambivalent but violent struggle against women."²² She argued that as New England's population grew and there was more competition for land and resources, independent women become threatening to men seeking status.²³ Women, such as those with no living male relatives who inherited property that would have otherwise gone to men, became targets

¹⁸ See Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*.

¹⁹ See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

²⁰ Ray, *Satan and Salem*.

²¹ See the foundation of *Feminist Studies* (1972) and Joan Scott's foundational article. Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis?" *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 1053-1075. See also Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith R. Walkowitz, eds., *Sex and Class in Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1983).

²² Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*.

²³ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 197.

of witchcraft accusations when they challenged or obstructed the property interests of men, thereby disrupting patriarchal modes of inheritance and patriarchy itself. The typical witch, then, was an older woman who lacked male protectors and exhibited transgressive behaviors such as pride, a lack of deference, or sexual deviance. This was the outlook of the work of Puritan intellectuals like Cotton Mather, who developed a witch/goodwife dichotomy that ascribed all good or bad characteristics to one or the other stereotype. Karlsen argued that the women who made up more of the possessed individuals in Salem played out a psychological tension between struggling against social restrictions and the necessity of abiding by them and avoiding taking on the characteristics of “the witch.”²⁴ She also found that earlier European thought on witchcraft explicitly identified women as the weaker vessels more subject to diabolic temptation. In New England, a Puritan emphasis on male self-direction relied on a construction of femininity as defined by being an ideal helpmeet, which created an ambiguity about the role of women with older misogynistic fears, culminating in the witch/goodwife dichotomy advanced by Puritan intellectuals like Cotton.²⁵

Elizabeth Reis published the second major feminist study of Salem Witchcraft in 1997. She turns from Karlsen’s economic motives for women’s identification as witches to the religious reasons, engaging both Puritan constructions of women as particularly likely witches and with possible motives for women’s confessions to witchcraft or reasons for believing themselves to actually be witches. She finds that women occupied

²⁴ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*. 47-227.

²⁵ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 153-181.

an ambiguous place in seventeenth-century Massachusetts. Women were subordinate to their husbands in the household, but at the same time marriage was supposed to be a relationship of "mutuality and reciprocity" in which spouses worked together, husbands did not abuse their power, and men treated their wives with kindness.²⁶ Women had space within their relationships and households to negotiate and "craft lives of meaning and worth."²⁷ Women could not become members of church leadership, but they still became full members, experienced conversion, read and taught the Bible, and spread "religiosity" in their communities, offering women "spiritual fulfillment and even particular opportunities for organizing and controlling their family relationships."²⁸ She argues that "Puritan theology demanded an unrelenting self-scrutiny from which a true believer...[one] could never derive too much optimism about salvation... Women in particular believed themselves more likely to be bound to Satan than to God. Convinced of their abiding sinfulness and guilt, some women needed little provocation to imagine that they had succumbed to the devil more literally and become witches."²⁹ Most tourist narratives in Salem since the 1970s have interpreted that witchcraft accusations in Salem did disproportionately harm women, as Karlsen notes, but typically fail to engage with women's interiority as advanced by Reis.

This dissertation does not seek to explain the causes of the Salem Witch Trials, which has been the focus of so much of their historiography. Rather, it examines the ways in which tourist attractions have used the Salem Witch Trials for education and

²⁶ Reis, *Damned Women*, xviii.

²⁷ Reis, *Damned Women*, xiv.

²⁸ Reis, *Damned Women*, xiv.

²⁹ Reis, *Damned Women*, xvii.

entertainment, and whether these re-imaginings uphold or challenge dynamics of power, race, gender, and violence in American culture since the late nineteenth century. This project does not argue that misogyny or colonial assumptions about enslaved women such as Tituba caused the witch trials, but it does follow scholarship that finds that the performance of classed, gender, and racialized identity did shape understandings of witchcraft generally and shift suspicions of witchcraft against some individuals in particular.³⁰ Thus, the ways in which public histories of 1692 narrate the roles of white women, indigenous persons, and Black women should be attended to.

While scholars have produced an enormous literature seeking to explain the origins of Salem witchcraft and to determine the degree to which it was exceptional in New England, the literature on the memory of Salem and its cultural meaning is limited relative to its outsized place in popular culture. Bernard Rosenthal was one of the earliest scholars to engage with public memory and Salem, although he is not concerned with tourism and popular culture in and of themselves. Rather, he does a close reading of Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* and other documents associated with 1692 in order to correct or contextualize shifting understandings of the witch trials in scholarship and popular culture.³¹ He begins each chapter by noting a particular stereotype or misconception regarding Salem and its historiography. For instance, in his chapter on Tituba and the initial accusations, Rosenthal notes that Tituba is usually blamed for witch trials and that she is often misidentified as African-American

³⁰ See John Demos, *Entertaining Satan*; Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion*; Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*; Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women*; Breslaw, *Tituba*.

³¹ Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

rather than as indigenous. But Rosenthal also notes that he finds it “unnecessary to belabor the racial and gender implications of Tituba as the author of sin.”³² After this dismissal, Rosenthal turns to his seventeenth-century sources to reconstruct the events of 1692.

This dissertation offers a counterpoint to Rosenthal’s dismissiveness and takes as its starting point that engaging the ways in which narratives around Salem portray race and gender is deeply necessary. If, as Rosenthal states, Salem possesses a “powerful hold on American imagination” and operates on an “archetypal” level in the national culture, it seems deeply necessary to understand the place that women and people of color play in that collective memory, and the ways in which that memory challenges or reifies attitudes towards women, particularly women of color, at particular points in time.³³ Black feminists have underscored the necessity of this via Angela Davis’s introduction to the 1992 English translation of Guadelupian novelist, playwright, and scholar Maryse Condé’s *I, Tituba* (1986). Condé’s novel depicts Tituba as a Black woman recounting the events of her life from Barbados to Salem, allowing her to speak and “revoke her own disappearance from history.”³⁴ As Davis states, reconstructing Tituba’s life on her own terms furthers the work of Black women activists in bringing the crimes of colonization to light and “shattering all the racist and misogynist misconceptions that have defined the place of Black women,” allowing them to “explore the infinite possibilities” of a history

³² Rosenthal, 13-14.

³³ Rosenthal, 1.

³⁴ Angela Davis, “Foreward,” in Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba*, trans. Richard Philcox (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), xii.

deliberately effaced in the name of white supremacy.³⁵ Taken together with scholarship, particularly that of Elaine Breslaw, Condé's work offers a model for dismantling racist constructions of Tituba and reinterpreting her life in her own historical and cultural context, with attention to her personhood and the ways in which she may have negotiated the power dynamics of enslavement, colonialism, and the Salem Witch Trials.

The most significant of the works on memory and Salem is Gretchen Adams' *Specter of Salem*, which uses educational literature to analyze the ways in which Salem operated as a "popular metaphor for persecution" and sectional divisions in the nineteenth century.³⁶ Although Adams never engages with the commemorative landscape around Salem or the rise of the tourist industry, Adams' text is invaluable first because it traces the history of Salem in American collective memory up through the period where my dissertation begins, and second because her analysis of Salem's shifting metaphorical meaning in political rhetoric is useful context. However, this dissertation will focus specifically on tourism rather than education and will also focus on the place of race and gender within New England identity, which Adams neglects.

This project will follow Adams in considering that the discourses on Salem are a means by which Americans negotiate social boundaries, anxieties, questions of morality and power, as well as issues of identity. Consequently, the narratives attached to the witch trials shift and change over time to reflect and construct crises and values of a particular historic moment.³⁷ Thus, by analyzing the ways in which the accused and

³⁵ Davis, "Foreward," xii.

³⁶ Gretchen Adams, *The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 3.

³⁷ Adams, 1-9.

accusing men and women are portrayed, the degree to which women are centered in particular interpretations or types of touristic activity, and treatments of their victimization, the dissertation will trace how Americans have used Salem as a means of mediating anxieties about patriarchy and the shifting roles of women and people of color from the nineteenth century to the present.³⁸

The literature on Salem tourism itself is concerned with broadly narrativizing the development of the tourism industry, tracing tensions between maritime history and witchcraft history, and using Salem as a case study to think about the role of authenticity, conferred by historical accuracy and/or physical remains of the past, in tourism.³⁹ *Salem: Place Myth and Memory*, for instance, is a collection of essays about the history of Salem. Taken together, they are meant to raise questions about why certain events like the Salem Witch Trials have a lasting role in public memory while others do not. However, as a text aimed at undergraduate classes, it is at least as much a survey of the history of the city as it is an investigation into why some aspects of Salem's past are

³⁸ This dissertation will follow the work of gender scholars such as Judith Bennett in conceptualizing patriarchy. Bennett argues that patriarchy is reformulated over and over again "as men have grappled with the effective exercise of social and political power." Patriarchy is a flexible system in which the "structures of domination" can be adapted to maintain male power. There is not "patriarchy" so much as "any given patriarchy" operational at a particular point in time. Furthermore, as noted by scholars such as Alexandra Shepherd, patriarchy is also a system that shapes and constrains the behavior of men. The ways in which men and women experience patriarchy depends upon the intersections of race, gender, class, age, and marital status. Thus, for example, white, middle-class, male speakers at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial in 1885 sought to rehabilitate the reputations of their seventeenth-century antecedents and reify their own authority. Rebecca Nurse, a respectable, elderly, married woman is entitled to male protection in a way that Tituba is not. Judith Bennett, "Feminism and History," *Gender and History* 1 (1989), 259-263. See also Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," 1053-1075; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); William P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument* (Salem: Salem Press, 1886).

³⁹ Frances Hill, "Salem as Witch City," 283-298; Robin DeRosa, *The Making of Salem: The Witch Trials in History, Fiction, and Tourism* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2009), Kindle; Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, "Touring History: Guidebooks and the Commodification of the Salem Witch Trials," *The Journal of American Culture* 30 (2007), 271-284.

important to the city's memory and others are forgotten.⁴⁰ Frances Hill's essay, "Salem as Witch City," specifically traces the growth of witchcraft tourism and questions the ethics of commodifying the deaths of the executed witches.⁴¹ Similarly, Stephen Olbrys Gencarella analyzes Salem guidebooks from the nineteenth century to the present in order to demonstrate the development of a contentious bifurcation at the turn of the century between boosters seeking to capitalize on the city's associations with witchcraft and those seeking to distance themselves from it and identify the city with its maritime past.⁴²

This dissertation will use this scholarship as a reference for the basic chronology of tourism in Salem. It also builds on Gencarella's assertion that tourist guidebooks and interpretations are a form of rhetoric that "legitimize certain discursive practices (such as commodification or commemoration)" and blend tourists' interests with local identities and goals.⁴³ However, this literature tends to treat regional identity, maritime heritage, and witchcraft tourism as very general categories with little engagement with the specific discourses they present. Instead, these works generally comment broadly upon the overall tone of particular sites, for instance as scholarly or sensational, crassly commercializing the deaths of the accused.⁴⁴ They also tend to treat city memory and identity as given categories without really engaging with who is included in these conceptualizations, and on what terms.⁴⁵ This project thus intervenes in the literature by delving deeper into the

⁴⁰ Nancy Lusignan Schultz and Dane Anthony Morrison, "Salem Enshrined: Myth, Memory, and the Power of Place," in Morrison and Schultz, *Salem*, 3-20.

⁴¹ Hill, "Salem as Witch City," 283-298.

⁴² Olbrys Gencarella, "Touring History," 271-284.

⁴³ Gencarella, 272. For more on tourism as a rhetorical practice, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ Hill, "Salem as Witch City"; Gencarella, "Touring History"; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*.

⁴⁵ Hill, "Salem as Witch City"; Gencarella, "Touring History"; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*.

identity politics at work in notions of heritage and more overtly commercialized tourism in Salem, and by considering how particular modes of touristic discourses reify notions of who is a New Englander as well as normative standards of racialized and gendered conduct. In many ways, the Salem witch trials disrupt ideas of New England exceptionalism and challenge the memory work done by white, middle-class people to present the region as essentially Caucasian, rational, moral, and progressive. Therefore, discourses in witchcraft tourism offer a particularly useful lens for analyzing the fractures, ambivalences, and reconciliations present in regional history making and identity formation.

Colonial Gender in Public History

As shown by scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm and Patricia West, the late nineteenth century was the moment of the “invention of tradition,” which served to instill social cohesion, stable conceptions of status, institutional validity, and the acceptance of middle-class ideologies and conduct.⁴⁶ The tradition established by museums and other touristic sites was largely white, middle or upper-class, and patriarchal. Elite white men and women of the early preservation movement were principally concerned with preserving early American architecture that would instill white Anglo-Saxon Protestant values in the poor and immigrants through environmental reform and aesthetic moralism. In order to inculcate Americans with proper family values, historians presented the

⁴⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, “The Invention of Tradition,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1983), 1-14.

colonial family unit in highly domestic, highly simplified terms that mapped over bourgeois ideals of gendered behavior.⁴⁷

This emphasis on promoting the colonial family as a model for bourgeois turn-of-the-century Americans poses a difficulty in Salem, where white patriarchs persecuted (mostly) white women, including respectable gentlewomen. This project will unpack the ways in which people grappled with this potential threat to the legitimacy of patriarchy, for instance by emphasizing the need for men to protect the afflicted girls, contrasting the religious zealotry of early colonial men with modern masculine reason to emphasize progress, or the assertion of alternate male heroes like Rebecca Nurse's sons, who defied unjust powers to recover their mother's body for Christian burial.⁴⁸

Further, this emphasis on an idealized separation of spheres between private, female domestic spaces and public, male, civic ones has hampered contemporary attempts by historic house sites like the Rebecca Nurse Homestead and the Jonathan

⁴⁷ See Susan Reynolds Williams, *Alice Morse Earle and the Domestic History of Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Debra Reid, "Making Gender Matter: Interpreting Male and Female Roles in Historic House Museums," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, Jennifer Foy Donnelly, ed. (New York: AltaMira Press, 2003), 81-104; Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991); Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993); Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory: Writing America's Past, 1880-1980* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). For colonial gender, see Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Ruth H. Bloch, *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); Anne M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Abby Chandler, *Law and Sexual Misconduct in New England, 1650-1750: Steering Toward New England* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁸ For example, *Visitor's Guide to Salem*, (Salem: Henry P. Ives, 1880). Upham, *Account*.

Corwin House to critically engage the role of gender in witchcraft accusations.⁴⁹ The strict association of women with domestic tasks, and the cutting off of the household's space from the larger community and polity, is particularly problematic in Salem where the intersections of gendered labor, domestic and community spaces, and the legal and political regional contexts are critical to understanding Euro-American witch trials.⁵⁰ This approach tends to promote a bifurcation in interpretation between the Salem Witch Trials resulting from male action in public and female domestic squabbles in private.

From the nineteenth century to the present, the tourism industry in Salem has used colonial womanhood to reflect and validate contemporary gender ideals. For example, Victorians used Rebecca Nurse to valorize pious domesticated femininity, and to this day her home is interpreted mostly in a tidy domestic context of spinning, cooking, and childrearing without really engaging in the importance of these tasks to the economy or the role of her household within Salem at large.⁵¹ By emphasizing that Nurse was different than the usual sort of troublesome woman, who would normally get identified as a witch, and coding her death as particularly tragic, the interpretation reifies conservative ideals of modest female behavior. More contemporary, feminist narratives tend to highlight the transgressive characteristic of accused women in order to validate and celebrate a lack of conformity with patriarchy.⁵² Notably, both of these types of narratives center whiteness. Ultimately, the events of Salem are often presented in a way

⁴⁹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018. Witch House, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵⁰ For instance, see Karlsen *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*; Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁵¹ Upham, *Account*.

⁵² For example, "Black Cat Tour," Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016.

that maximizes horror; and horror as a genre and set of narrative devices tends to distill the values of a society to their essence and dwell on the consequences of behavior that transgresses social norms.⁵³ Thus, depictions of gender in Salem serve to comment upon the boundaries of acceptable gendered (particularly feminine) behavior and reflect cultural attitudes towards female transgression and assertiveness.

African Slavery in Public History Historiography

My dissertation also builds upon public humanities scholarship on representations of slavery. This literature is primarily concerned with interpreting slavery at historic house museums, particularly plantation sites, and the construction of narratives of slavery following the Civil War. Heritage sites have been deeply implicated in perpetuating white supremacist narratives surrounding slavery through the representation of *Gone with the Wind* antebellum fantasies and the replication of racist stereotypes. They have also played an active role in continuing these historical erasures and perpetuating racial hierarchies in the present.⁵⁴ Because of this role, interpreting slavery is one of the most charged, and most pressing, needs in creating a more inclusive and socially responsible public history

⁵³ For discussions of gender and horror films, see Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 2015) and Barry Keith Grant, ed., *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

⁵⁴ For slavery in public history, see David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002); Thomas Norman DeWolf, *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009); Kristin L. Gallas, James DeWolff Parry, and Rex Ellis, *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2014); James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, *Slavery and Public History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Vintage Departures, 1998); Antoinette Jackson, *Speaking for the Enslaved: Heritage Interpretation at Antebellum Plantation Sites* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Teresa Moyer, *Ancestors of a Worthy Life: Plantation Slavery and Black Heritage at Mount Clare* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015).

practice in general and at historic sites in particular.⁵⁵ Public historians have made efforts since the rise of both anti-racist social movements and social history to engage critically with African American history and studies of race, to appeal to a (somewhat) more socially-conscious white audience, and to attract African American tourist revenue.⁵⁶ However, representations of slavery generally remain minimizing and distorting, particularly in the North.

Joanne Melish's *Disowning Slavery* is key for understanding the ways in which New Englanders actively worked to remove the presence of enslaved persons from historical memory between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century in order to cohere regional identity and define themselves in opposition to the Black, slave-owning South.⁵⁷ My research brings together the literatures on African and Indian slavery in New England through readings of Tituba, who has been identified variously as Black, indigenous, and in one case "Hindoo" in tourism.⁵⁸ Discussed below, the dissertation will

⁵⁵ For general studies of slavery, see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Stuart B. Schwartz ed., *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laird Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Mariana Dantas, *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Jack Greene and Philip Morgan, eds. *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Robert S. DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁵⁶ See Lynnell Thomas, *Desire and Disaster in New Orleans: Tourism, Race, and Historical Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁵⁷ Joanne Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ See Hansen, "The Metamorphosis of Tituba," 3-12. *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903).

trace how this memory work continued in Salem after 1880, when mass tourism of Salem witchcraft began to boom, where the centrality of Tituba to the narrative of the witch trials makes her impossible to ignore.

Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small's *Representing Slavery* is the foundational work on the ways in which plantation house museums specifically have been active in perpetuating distorted historical memories of slavery.⁵⁹ They argue that the narratives told at historic house museums "contribute to racialized understandings of the world," and typically document and interpret race in ways that glorify whiteness and "protect the morality and justice of white racial advantage."⁶⁰ Overall, this process depends upon distorting the presence of slaves through erasure, trivialization, or marginalizing interpretations so that slavery-related content can be ignored by visitors.⁶¹ In cases of erasure, sites efface the presence of enslaved persons at a historic site.⁶² Trivialization presents slavery as ultimately benevolent and minimizes the violence of the institution, while marginalization incorporates some discussion of slavery into site interpretation, but in such a way that visitors can easily ignore it.⁶³ Although they focus on African slavery in a plantation setting, their formulations are crucial for thinking about elisions of race and slavery in Salem.

This dissertation will analyze the application of these rhetorical strategies to the interpretation of the enslaved persons at Salem, namely Tituba, her husband John Indian,

⁵⁹ Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small. *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2002).

⁶⁰ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 2-4, 8.

⁶¹ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 105-202.

⁶² Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 105-146.

⁶³ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 147-202.

and Mary Black, who was enslaved by Nathaniel Putnam, accused of witchcraft, and acquitted.⁶⁴ Mary Black, for instance, is nearly entirely erased from witchcraft tourism. The only reference to her that I have found so far has been on a walking tour, which emphasized the injustice of the witch trials by highlighting the imprisonment of the city's most vulnerable, including the (approximately) four-year old Dorcas Good and "a slave."⁶⁵ The tour guide uses Black's status as an enslaved woman to make a point about legal injustice, but omits her name and any biographical information. In doing so, the guide renders Black an abstracted figure of injustice rather than a person. At sites seeking to historicize the witch trials through more traditional interpretation, Tituba and John Indian are marginalized in favor of a discussion of white, male legal actors, and frontier warfare.

Besides the strategies identified by Eichstedt and Small, however, many nineteenth-century tourist guides and contemporary sites that focus more on entertainment tend to *center* the presence of Tituba in order to mitigate white guilt. These sites highlight Tituba's race, essentially portraying her as a perverse Mammy figure, in order to scapegoat her for the outbreak of the witchcraft hysteria. Racist narratives blame her for bringing superstition and magical practices to the Parris household, corrupting white children, and accusing innocent white women, thereby beginning the witch panic.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "Examination of Mary Black and Clearance by Proclamation," *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, University of Virginia, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n15.html>

⁶⁵ "Salem Witch Walk," Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁶ For example, Charles Bancroft Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News* (Salem: Salem Evening News, 1897). Salem Witch Museum, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Salem Witch History Museum, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

Tituba may be represented to greater or lesser degrees, and in different modes, across sites and periods, but her presence or erasure ultimately tends to offer the least discomfiture possible to white audiences.

Lynnell Thomas demonstrates the problems with such comfortably conciliatory approaches to integrating the history of slavery into historic house museums. Thomas argues that “inclusive” histories and superficially diverse representations of African Americans actually reinforce racial stratification. Multicultural marketing strategies such as New Orleans’ “gumbo pot” racial motif, she argues, presents a false image of cooperation and harmony which delegitimizes efforts for social justice and minimizes inequalities among races and economic groups.⁶⁷ In her studies of New Orleans walking tours, she also identifies a tendency for tour guides to present Black history as entertainment so as to not trouble white tour-goers, while allowing them to feel socially-conscious for going on a Black history tour.⁶⁸ For Thomas, this is a feature of “post-civil rights discourse,” which “fulfilled visitors’ desire for Black representation and multiculturalist rhetoric” while simultaneously alleviating guilt over slavery and racial inequities.⁶⁹

Thomas’s work will be important to the dissertation in several ways. First, her emphasis on the role of tourism in presenting narratives for a white American gaze that allow white people to feel good about multiculturalism without ever having to feel uncomfortable about their own positionality, will inform my analysis of Tituba’s

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 46.

⁶⁸ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 53-91.

⁶⁹ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 83.

representation. For instance, the Jonathan Corwin House corrects historical misrepresentations of Tituba's ethnic identity, but its treatment of her as an exceptional figure in New England allows visitors to feel good about critiquing historical racism without ever having to engage with the legacies of racism, slavery, settler colonialism, and their erasure in New England. Here, even an indictment of past racism in tourism ultimately acts to expiate white guilt.⁷⁰ This project will also draw upon Thomas's approach of keeping particular tourist narratives in dialogue with larger cultural, economic, and political issues of race and gender in the United States, tracing the ways in which they are mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, it is influenced by Thomas's place-based approach to questions of tourism, power, and identity.

Silences in public history practice regarding slavery and colonial violence are particularly notable when one considers the lack of intersection in representing frontier warfare and removal, indigenous slavery, and African slavery. Tiya Miles' case study of the Vann House Museum, a nineteenth-century plantation owned by a Cherokee family and worked by enslaved Africans, highlights the interpretive problems that persist even in cases where museums do engage with these ideas.⁷¹ Miles demonstrates that in order to reconcile an indigenous presence in a traditionally white cultural role, the staff at Vann House essentially "whitened" the Cherokee owners by emphasizing their adoption of white cultural markers like Protestantism, education, genteel architecture, and plantation living, all while effacing the presence of enslaved Africans.⁷²

⁷⁰ Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁷¹ Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 12-14.

⁷² Miles, *House*, 12-14.

Narratives like those presented at Vann House serve as a form of double racial erasure, effacing Black enslaved persons and capitalizing on nostalgia for Indian life while also being complicit in its removal. My dissertation builds upon this work by considering the ways in which Tituba and the question of her racial identity have been used to perpetuate erasures around these forms of racialized violence. Most obviously, Tituba's portrayal as an African woman erases the presence of indigenous slavery in the Americas. Indeed, twentieth-century representations of Tituba, a figure of racialized horror for white Americans, as Black rather than Indian, suggests complacency in indigenous erasure as a perception of Black Americans as the greater threat to white patriarchal social order. Even in contemporary interpretation when confusion over Tituba's racial identity is noted, informational panels do not do much more than correct an error; there is little or no engagement with the colonial forces that gave rise to the omission and these interpretations fail to paint a more complex portrait of seventeenth-century racial politics.⁷³ In shallow interpretations, the erasure of Native Americans (or their removal to the colonial periphery in frontier warfare), when combined with an emphasis on Tituba's identity as *West* Indian, effaces New England as indigenous space. It suggests that New England is intrinsically white and casts indigenous persons as outsiders. Further, by really only correcting the error of Tituba's racial identification and not engaging with why this error occurred and had cultural resonance, museums seem to displace guilt for African slavery and erase its presence in the North. Even at sites like

⁷³ Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018. "Bewitched After Dark," Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

Salem and Vann House, where forms of racialized violence and erasures should intersect in public history practice, race and colonialism instead seem to be deployed in ways that minimize one another and maximize the comfort of white tourists.

In *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*, Miles considers how heritage sites use ghost tours to entertain and (ostensibly) inform tourists. She finds that sensationalizing the horrors of slavery nullifies any attempts at critique, thereby making slavery “fun” for tourists without fostering critical thinking about the white supremacist systems slavery engendered.⁷⁴ Miles argues that while ghost tours have the potential to undermine white supremacy through affect and crafting narratives otherwise “suppressed, avoided, or euphemized in public life,” by expressing traumatic experiences of slavery as supernatural events, ghost tours allow visitors to “index disturbing historical happenings” but nevertheless “contain the threat of that knowledge by making it unbelievable.”⁷⁵ Ultimately, ghost tourism supports and upholds traditional white patriarchal values.

Miles’s formulation will be used to analyze ghost tourism in Salem, as well as sites like the Salem Witch Museum and Salem Witch Dungeon, which are marketed as entertainment and draw upon dark lighting, Vincent Price-style voiceovers, and narrative

⁷⁴ Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism* (London: Cengage, 2000); AV Seaton, “Guided by the Dark: From Thanatopsis to Thanatourism,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 2 (1996), 234-244. For more on dark tourism, see Brigitte Sion, *Death Tourism: Disaster Sites as Recreational Landscape* (London: Seagull, 2014); Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, eds., *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009); Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); Michele Hanks, *Haunted Heritage: The Cultural Politics of Ghost Tourism, Populism, and the Past* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2015).

⁷⁵ Miles, *Tales*, 15.

sensationalism to evoke horror. As in the case of plantation tourism, the subversive potential of affective historical narratives goes unrealized. Although these sites center women to a much greater degree than traditional historical sites, the ways in which they do so affirm the necessity of white patriarchy and delimit acceptable (racialized) female behavior. As noted above, by centering Tituba's race, enslavement, and cultural background, historical attractions construct her as a suspicious outsider in an anachronistically white vision of New England's past, underscoring her scapegoating as the "spark" of the 1692 trials.⁷⁶ Further, her shifting representation as indigenous or African indicates the degree to which cultural memory of Native American slavery has been effaced and African female subordination has been naturalized in the popular imagination. The conflation of Tituba's racial identity also highlights tourists' and museums' lack of concern for her individual personhood. Instead, she is reduced to something of an avatar for twentieth-century anxieties about civil rights and threats to white hegemony. Her status as a slave legitimizes white male dominance by emphasizing the insidious, hierarchy-disrupting nature of witchcraft hysteria and panic. Tituba is often shown as a dangerous, unstable force within the Parris household and Salem Village community who, wittingly or unwittingly, contaminated the white children under her care with her superstitions. These children, under her malign influence, disrupted white patriarchal social functioning by wielding influence over adult men with their accusations. Thus, in order to be able to foreground social disorder and legitimize white

⁷⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016. Salem Witch Museum, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Salem Witch Dungeon, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

patriarchy, Tituba's status as a slave and non-white woman needs to be placed front and center in the narrative being created.

Indigenous Erasure in New England

I also draw upon literature regarding indigenous erasure in public memory and historical practice, to think about New England as an indigenous space at the end of the seventeenth century. Lisa Brooks' *The Common Pot*, for instance, offers a framework for thinking of New England as a contested, indigenous space in which Native Americans used place-based histories and narratives to resist colonization.⁷⁷ She challenges scholars who relegate Native American history to the periphery of early American history and colonial space, positing instead an intellectual framework that centers indigenous landscapes and history in order to combat erasure and tendencies to view indigenous peoples as vanished or frozen in the past.

Firsting and Lasting by Jean M. O'Brien also engages with the process of indigenous erasure as white Euro-Americans sought to negate their place in the nation in order to deny indigenous claims to rights and land.⁷⁸ Anglo-Americans in New England "dominated" early American print culture and presented themselves as the "the first people to erect the proper institutions of a social order worthy of notice."⁷⁹ Because of New England's outsized influence on history-writing and literary culture, the methodologies, erasures, and mentalities of early and nineteenth-century authors shaped

⁷⁷ Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁷⁸ Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁷⁹ O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xii.

American culture and understandings of history as a whole. These writers developed “scripts,” O’Brien argues, which “insisted that non-Indians held exclusive sway over modernity, denied modernity to Indians, and in the process created a narrative of Indian extinction that has stubbornly remained in the consciousness and unconsciousness of Americans.”⁸⁰ This sort of imagining of the American past is replicated in regional histories throughout the nation, partly through tourism and public history practice. The denial of Indian modernity continues to inform non-indigenous views of Native Americans, the nation, and inhibit contemporary social justice work. In fact, many of the writers promoting an idea of Native American extinction would have lived alongside indigenous people.⁸¹ O’Brien’s work is key for thinking about rhetorical strategies of colonialism, archival practice broadly and reading against the archive in particular.

Christine M. DeLucia’s *Memory Lands* will also be instructive for thinking about indigeneity, colonial violence, and memory projects in New England. Through a place-based analysis of memory and King Philip’s War, DeLucia argues that the power structures of settler colonialism continue to undermine tribal sovereignty and land rights, partly by the marking of sites of memory on the New England landscape, in which sites associated with “Native refuge and survivance” are marginalized or elided.⁸² This tendency to view Native Americans as peripheral, to see New England as fundamentally white, and to treat indigenous persons as subjects rather than active agents and producers of culture and knowledge is very much a part of tourist narratives in Salem. Therefore,

⁸⁰ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xiii.

⁸¹ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xiv.

⁸² Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

O'Brien's, DeLucia's, and Brooks' work offer a methodological framework for thinking about representations or absences of indigeneity in Salem tourism, historiography, and epistemologies. The dissertation will also bring together the literatures on African slavery and indigenous slavery to think about the intersections of tourism, race, colonialism, and regional (and national) identity in Salem, particularly in representations of the figure of Tituba.⁸³

Sources

This dissertation draws upon travel guides, souvenirs and ephemera, travel diaries, popular histories, television shows, newspapers, brochures, online travel review platforms such as TripAdvisor, and marketing materials from the nineteenth century through the present to reconstruct dominant tourist narratives of the Salem Witch Trials. I use participant observation, TripAdvisor reviews and aggregates of common reviewer terms as well as interviews with curators, docents, and museum educators to reconstruct visitors' responses to tourist scripts as well as their understandings of 1692 and early New England generally. I also rely upon site visits to museums, memorials, and walking tours undertaken in 2016, 2018, and 2019 for my analysis of contemporary tourism.

This dissertation categorizes public history institutions according to their interpretive tone, marketing, and treatment by cultural organizations like the National Park Service and the Chamber of Commerce into five categories: heritage sites, historical

⁸³ See, for instance, Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

sites and museums, edutainment sites, memorials, and paranormal or “haunted” tourism. “Heritage” will be used to connote traditional, public-facing narratives of the past that are typically attached to grand houses and reify conservative narratives of nation, class, gender, and race.⁸⁴ In Salem, these are also sites associated with the maritime industry, such as the Customs House and merchants’ mansions, which are even officially termed the “Essex Heritage” area by the National Park Service.⁸⁵ The dissertation uses the terms “historic site” or “history museum” to refer to sites like the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, the Jonathan Corwin House, and the Peabody Essex Museum, which are primarily motivated by educational goals and seek to explain 1692 in strictly historical terms. This category stretches to include walking tours with similarly didactic content, like the National Park Service’s witchcraft walking tour and the daytime Salem Witchcraft Walk. Edutainment sites refer to places such as the Salem Witch Museum, Salem Witch History Museum, and the Salem Witch Dungeon, which “make fun educational” and prioritize entertainment through sensationalism.⁸⁶ These sites create an atmosphere of horror through low lighting, sinister voice-overs narrating the witch trials through a series of tableaux, sound effects, and a narrative emphasis on transgression and violence. Memorials such as the Salem Witch Memorial, the Danvers Witch Memorial, and the Proctor’s Ledge Monument commemorate the victims of the witch trials. Finally, entertainment sites are primarily concerned with the paranormal aspects and popular

⁸⁴ Jackson, *Speaking for the Enslaved*, 23. David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusades and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xv.

⁸⁵ Salem Visitor Center, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁸⁶ DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*, 173.

culture of witchcraft. These include movie tours, Dracula's Castle, and, most importantly for the dissertation, ghost tours.

Tourism Sites

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead is the former home of Rebecca Nurse, whose accusation and execution was particularly shocking in 1692 and is represented as such in subsequent tourism. At the time of the witch trials, Nurse was an elder, covenanted church member who had an upstanding reputation in her community. From the nineteenth century forward, tourism presents her as being particularly pious and as a model of womanly virtue. In the 1880s, her descendants erected a memorial to her memory and Christian piety. Currently, the site interprets the house strictly as a colonial historic house museum, offers access to the memorial and family cemetery without interpretation, and houses a replica of the Salem meeting house from the 1992 film adaptation of *The Crucible*, which interprets the history of the witch trials principally in terms of its legal history.⁸⁷ Nurse is one of the principal figures interpreted in witchcraft tourism. The Jonathan Corwin House, also known as the "Witch House" from at least the nineteenth century and since, had been the home of Judge Jonathan Corwin. Nineteenth-century popular belief also marked it, erroneously, as a location where examinations of accused witches took place. Currently, it offers some interpretation of the Salem Witch Trials

⁸⁷ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018. Upham, *Account*.

alongside traditional interpretations of colonial domestic tasks like cooking and spinning.⁸⁸

Facing deindustrialization and an economic downturn in the 1970s, Salem businesses and municipal bodies like the Chamber of Commerce increasingly turned to tourism as a form of revenue, and the first for-profit museums built to attract witchcraft tourists opened their doors during these years. The first of these, the Salem Witch Museum, opened as a for-profit business in 1972.⁸⁹ Visitors first sit in the middle of a darkened room, where tableaux representing events in the witch trials (and an enormous devil figure with glowing red eyes) are illuminated around the top of the room, and a dramatic voiceover recounts the events of 1692. Visitors are then guided around a display of a general history of Euro-American witchcraft with a mix of docent commentary and pre-recorded audio.⁹⁰

The Salem Witch Dungeon Museum followed in 1979. Visitors there begin their experience with a live reenactment of a witch trial, and then are led downstairs by one of the costumed actors to a recreation of scenes from the witch trials (such as hangings and court examinations) as well as a reconstruction of jail cells, including a beam from the now demolished 1692 prison.⁹¹ The Salem Witch History Museum also uses tableaux, low lighting and sound effects, and guided tours to recount the witch trials in a slightly

⁸⁸ Witch House, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018. For nineteenth and early twentieth-century understandings of the site, see for example *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Henry P. Ives, 1880).

⁸⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 278.

⁹⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September, 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁹¹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

larger regional context, for instance by beginning with the threat of frontier warfare with Native Americans in Maine.⁹²

Three memorials have also been built to commemorate the witch trials. At the tercentenary of the memorial, the Salem and Danvers (formerly Salem Village) dedicated memorials to the witch trials. They are meant to honor the deceased and to commemorate other acts of persecution.⁹³ Most recently in 2017, after decades of debate about the location of the execution site, the city dedicated the Salem Witch Trials Memorial at Proctor's Ledge to the memory of the executed.⁹⁴

Some of the most popular activities in Salem are walking tours around the downtown area, which encompasses the Salem Witch Trials Memorial, historic house districts, the Witch House, and the sites of destroyed buildings associated with 1692 such as the prison and meetinghouse. Historical tours vary widely in scope from a narrow focus on 1692 to ranging overviews of the city's history from its indigenous roots through the twentieth century, while Wiccans offer walks elucidating contemporary witchcraft. At night, tourists may also participate in ghost tours, which offer a mix of ghost stories, evidence of the supernatural captured by other visitors, and encouragement to encounter the paranormal for themselves. Others blend these genres to encompass historical facts about the Salem Witch Trials, its connections with television and film,

⁹² Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹³ Salem Witch Memorial, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Danvers Witch Memorial, Site visit, Danvers, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁴ Kiana Cole, "Salem Witch Trials Memorial Dedicated," *Boston Globe*, July 19, 2017. Researchers at Salem State University confirmed the site in 2016. Laura Crimaldi, "Researchers pinpoint site of Salem witch hangings," *Boston Globe*, January 23, 2016.

true crime, and local legends. These tours tend to be highly conversational and often offer interpretation of the tourism industry itself.

Outline

Chapter One examines race and gender in witchcraft tourism from the 1870s through the 1950s during the rise of mass tourism. The basic narrative of events articulated during this period have remained foundational to interpretation of 1692 down to the present day. The authors of travel guides, local historians, and historical organizations like the Essex Institute sought to rehabilitate the reputations of the elite white men who oversaw the witch trials in order to affirm the honor of white patriarchs in the present and naturalize their own white patriarchal authority. On the whole, these guides portray the city as an emblem of white middle-class American identity and progress, highlighting the colonial domestic architecture and sites associated with its colonial beginnings, the Revolutionary War, global trade, and industrial progress. At the same time, they acknowledge the associations of the city with witchcraft and seek to reconcile 1692 with an otherwise straightforward touristic narrative of white patriarchal triumphalism.⁹⁵ By retelling the events of the witch trials in ways that valorize masculine

⁹⁵ See for instance the H.P. Hunt *Visitor's Guide* series of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s or the Maud del Mar Blackwelder papers. *Maud Del Mar Blackwelder Travel Diaries, 1938-1957*. Diary. Ms. N-1847. Massachusetts Historical Society. The tourist sites associated with witchcraft remain pretty consistent in tourist guides through the early twentieth century. These include: the Court House, which displays Bridget Bishop's execution warrant; a bottle of "witch pins" used to torment the afflicted girls in court; the Rebecca Nurse Homestead and Memorial; the site identified as Gallows Hill in 1692; the site of the old jail; and the Corwin House, also known as the Witch House, for its association with Judge Jonathan Corwin who lived there in the 1690s and the mistaken belief that some witchcraft examinations took place there. For more on middle class whiteness and early preservation, see also Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*; Marguerite S Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

qualities like reason and strength of will, naturalize the leadership of educated elite white men, and emphasizing the triumph of rationality and progress in New England, these historians and tourism boosters position white patriarchy as necessary for social order and delimit the normative white masculinity necessary to uphold it.

This emphasis on preserving the honor of Massachusetts manhood marginalizes the accused women and elides their individuality. When women do appear, travel writers code their accusations and victimization in ways that affirm white patriarchy and condemn transgressive femininity. These representations construct normatively feminine women such as Rebecca Nurse as martyrs to exemplary Christian virtue in contrast to women who were more quarrelsome or sexually adventurous, like Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, who seem to have invited victimization.⁹⁶ These texts use Tituba as a scapegoat, blaming her for corrupting the initial accusers and naming other (white) women as witches, thereby beginning the trials. By valorizing women like Rebecca Nurse, who represented pious, domesticated femininity and presenting more unruly women as somewhat inevitable victims, the guides reify normative standards of behavior that align with patriarchal values. By presenting Tituba as inherently more corrupt and corrupting, early twentieth-century travel guides shift blame from white women and emphasize the need for strong patriarchal control. Amidst the intense nativism of the 1920s, guides also introduced elements of xenophobia, blaming the turmoil of 1692 on an influx of undesirable immigrants.

⁹⁶ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*.

Chapter Two examines the development of modern Salem witchcraft tourism in the 1950s through the 1990s, when, as industrialism in Salem declined, businesses and the city increasingly turned to tourism to revamp the economy. In the 1950s and 1960s, tourism continued to valorize white patriarchal authority but remolded older interpretive narratives to uphold a vision of American masculinity suited for the Cold War. Associations of Salem with witchcraft became particularly profitable after Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* (1953) and the television show *Bewitched* (1964-1972) renewed interest in the witch trials.⁹⁷ During this period, the Salem Witch Museum, the Salem Witch Dungeon, and the Salem Witch History museum opened to bring in increased tourism. Perhaps in response to the themes of scapegoating in Miller's work as well as a public outcry about the ethics of commercializing mass death, in the 1980s and 1990s these sites increasingly commodified a narrative that witchcraft tourism would offer a defense against abstracted "intolerance" and "injustice" in contemporary life. Because attractions failed to engage with these themes with much historical or modern specificity and continued to traffic in interpretation that marginalized women and people of color, tourism at the close of the twentieth century continued to bolster white patriarchy while paying lip-service to the importance of diversity and social progress.

These sites reveal an overall ambivalence about the position of women and people of color in the wake of the Civil Rights and women's liberation movements of the 1960s. The accused witches themselves appear more prominently, but often in highly

⁹⁷ See Hill, "Salem as Witch City," and Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*. This chapter will use promotional materials and travel guides, as well as institutional archives.

stereotyped ways. Institutions such as the Salem Witch Museum generally acknowledge Tituba's vulnerability as an enslaved woman, but simultaneously portrayed her as something of an inverted Mammy stereotype, casting her as an insidious presence within the Parris home. The role of the initial accusers expanded from early twentieth-century tourism, where they largely appeared as children unable to understand the implications of their actions and therefore unwittingly contributed to the witchcraft crisis. By the 1970s, tourist attractions increasingly shifted the blame for initiating witchcraft accusations from the adults in these children's lives and framed the afflicted as vicious teenagers. Interpretation increasingly framed teenage girls as somewhat inherently untrustworthy, petty and malicious, and in need of control. Accused women appeared passively as victims, while men like George Burroughs and Giles Corey had their agency emphasized and are portrayed more as defiant martyrs.⁹⁸ Thus, while these sites recognize women as central to the events of 1692, they view female power, especially when wielded by the young and women of color, as a threat when unchecked by male authority figures. Similarly, they reveal anxieties about male vulnerability to these women, and emphasize the bravery and moral integrity of Corey and Burroughs to prevent their being emasculated by teenage girls.

Chapter Three evaluates how (or if) the edutainment sites of the 1970s have updated or intervened in the staging and interpretation developed at the end of the twentieth century. On the whole, the tableaux and audio elements remain the basis of interpretation at the Salem Witch Museum, Salem Witch Dungeon, and the Witch History

⁹⁸ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

Museum.⁹⁹ The guided tour scripts offer an opportunity to comment on the narratives being presented and engage visitors in dialogue that goes unrealized. The racist and sexist overtones in the original interpretation are unremarked upon by docents. As noted by curators and docents working in the industry, primarily white, middle-class visitors enter witchcraft attraction convinced of a colonial imaginary of 1692 involving a sinister Black woman and malevolent, hysterical girls, viewing the Salem Witch Trials as an instant violent excess detached from their lives and the institutions of the present.¹⁰⁰ Stories at Salem's edutainment attractions play on these stereotypes to create an atmosphere of horror that will entertain and yet conform to audience expectations. The blend of museological forms at work in Salem's for-profit edutainment attractions could advance narratives that build historical understanding of 1692's most marginalized actors, but instead the interplay of entertainment with didactic museum forms authenticates the biases of white, middle-class tourists about Native Americans, women, and Black women as historically grounded.

Chapter Four examines historic sites and museums in the contemporary tourist industry. Here, I focus on sites such as the witchcraft memorials, the National Park Service programs, and sites like the Witch House and Rebecca Nurse Homestead. These sites attempt to present themselves as more scholarly, respectable institutions grounded in facts rather than overly commercialized entertainment. At the Rebecca Nurse Homestead,

⁹⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Salem Witch History Museum, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

these narratives generally de-center the accused and focus on the legal context for the witch trials in a way that largely erases women. The accused witches appear as incidental.¹⁰¹ The Witch House, by contrast, has updated their interpretation to focus on a more critical narrative of the witch trials that centers the historical narrative on women, and deconstructs much of the racism surrounding Tituba. However, as discussed above, Tituba is portrayed as something of an aberration in New England, affirming notions of the region as fundamentally white. The site also interprets the domestic life of women living in the house, but does not really bridge the gap between “normal” seventeenth-century life and the worldview in which witchcraft accusations took place.¹⁰² These sites reveal a greater willingness to interpret the lives of women and do not glorify elite white men as overtly as their counterparts in the nineteenth century, but by marginalizing discussions of misogyny, slavery, and race, they present a narrative that allows visitors to feel good about engaging with histories of women and people of color without having to engage with the systems of inequality that produced them, let alone their own places in those systems.

Chapter Five analyzes walking tours, which range in the depth of their critical engagement with history. For instance, the “Bewitched After Dark” tours offer an example of how to approach critical engagement with questions of race and gender in the past and contemporary tourism while still adhering to the Salem tourism brand. Here, the tour guide blends commentary on 1692, research methods, the development of Salem

¹⁰¹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

¹⁰² Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

tourism, and current events. This mix of conversation, affective storytelling, and personal experiences as a tour operator engages visitors in critical thinking and comments directly on issues of representation and marginalization, while also providing entertainment.¹⁰³ However, other tours have the potential to be subversive but ultimately uphold gendered and racial hierarchies. For example, one tour guide notes in a jokey, winking-at-the-audience tone that Bridget Bishop became known as a witch because of her overly sexual reputation and the fact that she owned a red dress.¹⁰⁴ While noting that transgressive femininity might make women like Bishop more susceptible to witchcraft charges implies a critique of patriarchy and misogyny, the lack of comment and the fact that her death is presented as a joke also indicates an ambivalence about the position of women. By locating this sort of misogyny firmly in the past, this type of tour allows visitors to enjoy the spectacle of witchcraft and view the attitudes that drove particular accusations at a remove. Similarly, ghost tours often include stories of accused witches haunting the individuals or community that condemned them. In this way, white women express anger and agency in their stories, but only in a supernatural imaginary. Women of color like Tituba typically continue to appear as supernatural figures, otherized, and denied the assumptions of innocence or expressions of rage that the white women in these narratives receive. Dynamics of race, colonialism, and resistance to them are denied even a spectral existence. Ultimately, this offers tourists some security in notions of progress without also asking them to engage with questions of continuity. On the whole, “progress” in

¹⁰³ “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

¹⁰⁴ “Hocus Pocus Tours,” Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016.

Salem has not been terribly radical or progressive. Salem tourist sites may comment vaguely that slavery is bad and misogyny is bad, but they do not engage with complex issues of American racial and gender politics. By promoting a narrative that generally condemns legal persecution but does not engage with thornier issues of how American social and legal cultures affect women and people of color particularly, contemporary narratives frequently replicate cultural assumptions that contribute to systemic inequality without comment or perhaps even awareness. In this way, the cultural work done by contemporary Salem Witch Trials tourism remains far too unchanged from its nineteenth-century origins.

Chapter One

“Such Illustrious Men”: Upholding White Patriarchy in Early Tourism, 1880-1950

Introduction

New England’s tourist industry soared by the end of the nineteenth century. A robust infrastructure of transportation, hotels, guides, and attractions guided middle class white Americans through a “cultural industry” of spectacular landscapes, scenes of industrial vitality, and historic architecture that allowed them to “stake claims to a genteel status by demonstrating their good taste and sensitivity.”¹⁰⁵ Enough of these visitors came to Salem that by 1880 the first *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* went into print to serve approximately thirty thousand tourists.¹⁰⁶ During this period, the authors of travel guides, local historians, and historical organizations like the Essex Institute sought to rehabilitate the reputations of the elite white men who oversaw the witch trials in order to affirm the honor of white patriarchs in the past and present. On the whole, guides authored by antiquarians, the local newspaper, and historical organizations like the Essex Institute portray the city as an emblem of white middle-class American identity and progress, highlighting the colonial domestic architecture and sites associated with Salem’s colonial beginnings, the Revolutionary War, global trade, and industrial progress. However, the city’s associations with the witch trials – a moment of terrible delusion in which the great men of Salem prosecuted innocent citizens on the basis of superstition – threatened this otherwise venerable history and tainted the honor of its citizens. Boosters acknowledged

¹⁰⁵ Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1997), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 271.

the associations of the city with witchcraft and sought to craft retellings of 1692 in a way that would incorporate the witchcraft crisis with an otherwise straightforward touristic narrative of white patriarchal triumphalism. Tourist materials expended a great deal of effort in rationalizing the actions of elite white colonists and shifting the taint of irrationality and malice to Tituba, an enslaved woman of color. By retelling the events of the witch trials in ways that valorize traditionally masculine qualities like reason and strength of will and emphasizing the triumph of rationality and progress in New England, these historians and tourism boosters positioned white patriarchy as necessary for social order. This process of reincorporating a moment of white patriarchal anxiety into reassuring visions of American progress allowed white bourgeois tourists to negotiate contemporary fears about the strength of white patriarchy in the face of mass industrialization, immigration, and shifting gender roles at the turn of the twentieth century.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, tourism and preservation strategies, the infrastructure, the political culture, and the print culture of New England allowed the region to cast itself simultaneously as the heart of American progress and American tradition. Travelers visited sites like the industrial mills at Lowell to witness the technological innovations and economic and social dynamism created by industrialization. Secondary schools and universities such as Harvard emphasized New England's leadership in education and the production of American citizens.¹⁰⁷ Salem produced itself likewise. In the introduction to an 1897 travel guide, for instance, the

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *Inventing New England*, 8.

author noted that Salem had been established in 1626, “four years before Boston,” and afforded visitors the opportunity to see “large and prosperous mercantile establishments, educational institutions and otherwise.”¹⁰⁸ Typical itineraries published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included sites like the Normal School for Ladies, which waived tuition for women who became teachers in Massachusetts Public Schools, as well as public grounds for the health and beauty of the town, notable banks and sites of commerce, and numerous charitable institutions such as the Old Ladies’ Home.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, sites associated with Nathaniel Hawthorne, the maritime industry and the earliest trade between the United States and China at the turn of the nineteenth century offered material evidence that Salem had long been at the forefront of America’s economic progress. The Essex Institute – a scientific, literary, and historical organization that maintained a museum and library, managed historical sites, and put out lectures, educational programming, and scholarly publications – displayed art purchased with the wealth generated by Salem’s citizens, and its East Asian collections emphasized the adventurousness and acumen of its businessmen in opening trade with Asia.¹¹⁰ Together, the schools, businesses, and homes of venerable Salem men past and present offered evidence that the city helped lead the way for the rest of the nation. Individuals like Nathaniel Hawthorne, the merchants of the Derby or Bowditch families, and

¹⁰⁸ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, *Pocket Guide to Salem* (Salem: Henry P. Ives Old Corner Bookstore, 1883); *Pocket Guide to Salem* (Salem: Henry P. Ives Old Corner Bookstore, 1885); T.F. Hunt, *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: H.P. Ives, 1880); *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902); *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1916), *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1922); *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903).

¹¹⁰ *Handbook of the Essex Institute* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1908).

contemporary civic leaders exemplified the ideal American man – educated, courageous, moral, and invested in “the preservation of land-marks and the establishment of institutions for the betterment of their fellow-man.”¹¹¹ Salem attained greatness because its men typified the best of white Anglo-Saxon masculinity; the works of its patriarchs looked towards the future but built on the deeds of the men who came before them.

Looking to the deeds of great men in the colonial and early national past was a key means of legitimizing the power of contemporary power structures that favored white Anglo-Saxon men and soothed anxieties about their social, moral, and cultural superiority in the face of immigration and social movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As shown by scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm and Patricia West, the late nineteenth-century was the moment of the “invention of tradition,” in which museums, historic preservation societies, and other forms of tourism served to instill social cohesion, stable conceptions of status, institutional validity, and the acceptance of middle class ideologies and conduct in visitors.¹¹² In New England, this led to a "sentimentalization" of the region as travel guides, histories, press, novels, and architectural and landscape preservation choices cultivated an image of New England as "rural, pre-industrial, and ethnically 'pure' – a reverse image of all that was most unsettling in late-nineteenth-century urban life."¹¹³ In reality, New England had significant urbanization, was ethnically diverse, and had a major industrial economy and industrial landscape. Boosters throughout New England invited visitors to see "an

¹¹¹ N.S. Messer, *Streets and Homes in Old Salem* (Beverly: Quality Press, 1956).

¹¹² Hobsbawm, “The Invention of Tradition,” 1-14.

¹¹³ Brown, *Inventing New England*, 9.

imagined world of...virtuous simplicity and religious and ethnic homogeneity."¹¹⁴ This could be achieved through aesthetic moralism, a process in which visitors would imbibe a nostalgic view of colonial life and morality through the viewing of historic homes or museums' period rooms that just so happened to map over the white bourgeois values of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁵

These characteristics of historic house museums remained urgent to white elites in the late nineteenth-century, as social conservatives looked upon Reconstruction, immigration, and the emergence of the women's rights movement with alarm. Women's volunteering in the Civil War had increased their organizational, semi-professional experiences and entrenched the historical orientation of women's activism in the public consciousness, as many festivals and fundraisers during the war had included historical elements like craft fairs and colonial kitchen exhibits. Industrial commercialism also seeped into the running of historic house museums, for instance allowing them to function somewhat as model homes with reproductions of historic furniture available for purchase.¹¹⁶ Elite white women of the Progressive Era used their organizational and entrepreneurial skills to form organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution to promote conservative values and instill white bourgeois morality in the poor, immigrants, and people of color.¹¹⁷ The preservation strategies of groups such as

¹¹⁴ Brown, *Inventing New England*, 9-10.

¹¹⁵ For more on aesthetic moralism in historic house museums, see Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999) and Williams, *Earle*. See also Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*; Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*; and Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory*.

¹¹⁶ West, *Domesticating History*, 39-43.

¹¹⁷ West, *Domesticating History*, 43-47.

these have furthered the preservation of sites and architectural forms associated with great white men and reified a national narrative centered on benevolent white patriarchy.

As Patricia West notes in *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, early historic house museums were “products as well as purveyors of history” that operated as “agents of American cultural politics” rather than “politically aloof, neutral institutions.”¹¹⁸ While the white, upper-middle class women at the helm of preservation organizations may have presented their goals and museums as “shrines” of “romantic patriotism,” they were in fact driven by political missions that served class interests.¹¹⁹

According to West, associations preserved places associated with great men in service of their political goal to “use history to achieve a society uniformly supportive of the American government.” Furthermore, by visiting sites associated with white domesticity and participating in associated programming, white women could teach the poor and immigrants what they saw as proper domestic skills and “make good citizens of our boys and girls” through aesthetic moralism.¹²⁰ The material culture of the middle class (like tea sets, silver) would form a material repertoire of performative gentility instructive to the viewer. The display of particular objects evoked cultural archetypes through form – for example, a colonial sundial stood for the passage of time and ancestry.¹²¹ In order to combat moral decline, historical associations operated sites

¹¹⁸ West, *Domesticating History*, xii. See also Lori Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹¹⁹ West, *Domesticating History*, xii.

¹²⁰ West, *Domesticating History*, 47.

¹²¹ Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*, 217-19.

associated with white middle class domestic life and colonial design that would instill ideas of quiet domesticity, virtuous womanhood, and white Protestant ethics through tasteful décor displayed at historic shrines.¹²²

This middle-class view of history could be authenticated with real things and material culture. Proponents of aesthetic moralism broadened the range of historical evidence to include the “vernacular objects and stories of everyday life,” which in turn became symbols of larger national meaning and morals.¹²³ Salem was in many ways particularly well-suited for this kind of memory making. At the Essex Institute, a society that managed a museum, library, historic properties, and didactic publications and public programming, visitors could visit some of the first period rooms in New England which used a blend of original and reproduction architectural elements and furnishings to produce a seemingly authentic experience of colonial life.¹²⁴ Tourists could also walk through streets lined with excellent examples of first period, Georgian, and federal architecture and visit the homes of men who modeled American values. This assemblage created a genteel American lineage through material culture and posited what one historian has termed an “essential nature of objects which legitimated the patrimonial claims of class and facilitated hegemonic devices that would perpetuate middle class moral codes.”¹²⁵ Tourism allowed white bourgeois travelers to escape the modern industrial life that New England had been key to creating and connect with the essence of

¹²² West, *Domesticating History*, 79.

¹²³ Williams, *Alice Morse Earle* 13, 204-7.

¹²⁴ Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*, 211.

¹²⁵ Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*, 217-19.

the region's identity, namely, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and their upright middle-class morality.

The white middle-class patriarch was at the heart of this memory project. Antiquarians, preservationists, and local museums invested the greatness of their locality in the bodies and actions of notable white male elites.¹²⁶ In Salem, travel guides from the 1870s through the 1960s crafted a history of Salem that progressed in stages from “settlement,” the “delusion” of 1692, the Revolution, Hawthorne and the maritime trade, and the present. Each of these eras was defined by the accomplishments of its distinguished male citizens. If a visitor picked up the 1880 *Visitor's Guide to Salem*, a 1922 edition produced by the Essex Institute, or a 1950 *Guide to the North Shore*, they would find guides curated to highlight the “most important sites, the most famous men” whose “talents and accomplishments wrote their names of the pages of history” and planted “the seed of our nation.”¹²⁷ The 1922 version of the *Visitor's Guide to Salem* structures explanations of the early colonial period in its “historical sketch” almost entirely as a list of important governors and churchmen; the 1950 guide literally includes a paragraph-long list of “illustrious men” who lived there and an 1897 guide has a full-page spread of portraits representing “a group of famous Salem men.”¹²⁸ A 1922 *Visitor's Guide* presented the men of Salem, who “initiated the political revolution” that led to

¹²⁶ See Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2003). West, *Domesticating History*, xii. See also Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*; Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*.

¹²⁷ Howard Foster, *Guide to the North Shore* (Marblehead: North Shore Publishers, 1950), n.p.

¹²⁸ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1922), 1-6. Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs*, 12.

American independence, providing numerous soldiers, officers, and privateers.¹²⁹ According to tourist manuals, the men of Salem truly began the Revolutionary War when the local halted a British advance through the city “two months before Lexington and Concord earned their immortal fame.”¹³⁰ Salem’s “men of substance” used the maritime experience they gained during the Revolution to launch the city’s “commercial supremacy” by opening and dominating trade with East Asia at the turn of the nineteenth century, as their “enterprise, energy, courage, and skill” gave Salem men “precedence...over those of all other American ports,” rendering the city one of the wealthiest in the country.¹³¹ Salem might also be noted for its contributions to American literature and culture as the birthplace of “celebrated novelist” Nathaniel Hawthorne.¹³² Salem had since distinguished itself by producing a number of politicians, soldiers, and intellectuals, serving as a “scientific and educational center.”¹³³ Thus, the greatness of Salem was in many ways invested in the bodies, intellects, and acumen of the city’s men. By extension, the city’s place in history and the honor of its citizens depended upon the performance of normative masculinity, defined by bravery, self-control, economic success, piety, and rationality.¹³⁴ Travel guides published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries repeated these narratives – nearly verbatim in some cases – across decades, rendering these notions of American masculinity and Salem identity mutually

¹²⁹ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1922), 6.

¹³⁰ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1937), 10.

¹³¹ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1922), 7.

¹³² T.F. Hunt, *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: H.P. Ives, 1880), 10. Foster, *Guide to the North Shore*, 65.

¹³³ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1922), 9.

¹³⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 25.

constitutive. In this way, Salem tourism sought to insert the city into a normative, abstracted white masculinity that governed the creation of civic culture nationwide. The manifest failures of these white, masculine qualities in 1692 threatened to disrupt this triumphalist rendering. As shown below, the project for tourist boosters and historians between 1880 and the 1950s became remaking the story of the witch trials in a way that would fit into a progressive model of history and allow Salem to retain its claims to being a beacon of intellectual, commercial, and revolutionary spirit.

Visitors to Salem seem to have viewed the city's history as defined by the deeds of exemplary male citizens as well. For example, when visiting his native Salem with his niece and nephew in 1889, Henry Bowditch sought to show them sites associated with the "most noted men" of the past, such as the home (erroneously) identified as that of Roger Williams.¹³⁵ Maud Del Mar Blackwelder, over the course of several visits in the 1930s, admired the "good character" and "lovely portraits" of Salem ladies but consistently ascribed historical agency and praise for the building the fortunes of the region to various sailors, merchants, and colonial governors.¹³⁶ Charles Huse, who visited in 1899, saw Salem's history as one made by "those who dared the uncertainties of the wilderness to enjoy America's greatest gift, freedom."¹³⁷ First, "the stalwart, enterprising pioneer" replaced Native Americans.¹³⁸ "Hardy" men "fought for liberty, risking all for

¹³⁵ Henry I. Bowditch. *Diary*. Diary. Bowditch Family Papers. Ms. N-1902. Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³⁶ *Maud Del Mar Blackwelder Travel Diaries, 1938-1957*. Diary. Ms. N-1847. Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³⁷ Charles Huse, *Charles Phillips Huse Diary*. Diary. Ms. N-2350. Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³⁸ Charles Huse, *Charles Phillips Huse Diary*. Diary. Ms. N-2350. Massachusetts Historical Society.

the sake of their children.”¹³⁹ In the “days of Hawthorne,” their descendants, Salem’s “bold sons swept the sea in their little merchant ship...far beyond the Cape of Good Hope, brought back the wealth of the Indies to her shores.”¹⁴⁰ The history of these men is “entwined” with that of the county as a whole.¹⁴¹ Thus, the honor and venerability of nineteenth and twentieth century Salemites depended not only upon their own characters, but upon the deeds and morals bestowed upon them by their ancestors.

White Men

The majority of Essex County tourism situated itself squarely within a tradition of New England triumphalism when interpreting their locality. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, travel writers presented the area as a beacon of moral and industrial progress, the heart of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant values and order, as well as the birthplace of the nation itself. The white, middle-class patriarch stood at the heart of this narrative. He paved the way for progress and the nation through colonization, revolution, and economic vitality. He also possessed the essential qualities of Americanness – particularly reason and strength of will – that made bourgeois white men essential for the maintenance of an orderly society. Salem boosters therefore faced quite a dilemma given the fact that in 1692 the stalwart New England patriarchs who embodied the integrity and superiority of their locale seemingly cast off all reason and, in the grip of a “great delusion,” persecuted mostly white women, including respectable

¹³⁹ Charles Huse, *Charles Phillips Huse Diary*. Diary. Ms. N-2350. Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Huse, *Charles Phillips Huse Diary*. Diary. Ms. N-2350. Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁴¹ Charles Huse, *Charles Phillips Huse Diary*. Diary. Ms. N-2350. Massachusetts Historical Society.

gentlewomen, for witchcraft. Rehabilitating the reputations of seventeenth-century Essex County men therefore became a central project for the first century of witchcraft tourism. Boosters placed narrative emphasis on heroic men who resisted the injustices of 1692 and contrasted the religious zealotry of early colonial men with modern masculine reason. In doing so, they emphasized Salem's role in ushering a more modern, rational age and argued that the men leading the witch trials actually acted according to normative masculine ideals to protect their communities. By the 1920s, amidst rising nativism, guides also incorporated the idea that the real rabble-rousers in 1692 actually immigrated to the area and undermined local order. These various strategies allowed tourist boosters between 1870 and the 1950s to affirm the rightness of white patriarchy as a means of organizing power relations.

As noted by historian Carole Shammas, for members of the white middle class living in the nineteenth century, the disintegration of the authority of the household head [over dependents]...was much more central to the definition of the modern United States in the middle of the nineteenth century than industrialization or urbanization" as children, women especially, gained increasing legal autonomy and pursued work beyond their homes and natal communities.¹⁴² This commercial economy also increasingly kept men away from home as they pursued "market-oriented work."¹⁴³ At the same time, constructions of fatherhood positioned their active involvement in family life as

¹⁴² Carole Shammas, *A History of Household Government in America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), xiii.

¹⁴³ Stephen M. Frank, *Life with Father: Parenthood and Masculinity in the Nineteenth-Century American North* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3.

necessary for the “moral and material welfare of children in a rapidly changing society.”¹⁴⁴ Without fatherly guidance, children could be “impulsive and self-centered, small beings unable to distinguish between reality and imagination or good and evil.”¹⁴⁵ In this way, turn of the century tourists believed strongly in the importance of active, present parenting for the moral development of children and increasingly worried about the ability of modern parents to provide such care.

Many travel writers interpreted the Salem Witch Trials as an object lesson in the chaos that could result from lax patriarchal authority in the home. Speeches at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial in 1883 stated that the real fault for the Salem Witch Trials belonged with the parents and “older persons” who failed to check the antics of the afflicted children. According to one speaker, “the doctor would probably not have been needed, or, if called, he should have administered tonics, with short advice touching their habits. The minister should have taught them before, what he might, to obey God and put their trust in Him, and love one another, and to let alone playings and conjurings with evil powers and names of evil. And the magistrates should have done nothing at all.”¹⁴⁶ Had the men of Salem lived up to their patriarchal responsibilities and masculine values – restraint, reason, control, piety – the tragedy of 1692 would have been avoided. Similarly, an 1891 article marks a key moment of escalation in the witch trials as when Samuel Parris called in clergymen to observe the potential bewitchment of the children in his home instead of “checking the silly and artful proceedings going on in his

¹⁴⁴ Frank, *Life with Father*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Frank, *Life with Father*, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Upham, *Account*, 18.

household.”¹⁴⁷ The 1926 Salem tercentenary souvenir guide notes that had the afflicted children been “scourged at the whipping post” the men of the town would have curtailed the witchcraft accusations; indeed, the author notes that two girls who were whipped “abandon[ed] their error.”¹⁴⁸ Had Parris been a strong head of his household and maintained a tighter control over his dependents, the witch trials might not have started. These commentaries on a lack of male control over households and the children of Essex County in general continued through the guides of the 1950s.¹⁴⁹ For instance, in a 1926 paper read at a meeting of the Rebecca Nurse Association, an organization of Nurse family descendants, the speaker stated: “When we read the accounts of the witchcraft trials we find that the flappers of that day were certainly as objectionable as any of their descendants of the present time are at the same age. Seldom does our latent belief in the necessity of corporal punishment seem so well justified as it does when we recall the silliness of these hysterical adolescents and the greater folly of their parents.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, the horror of the witch trials was in many ways a horror of social inversion in which patriarchal authority over their children and servants broke down and children asserted influence over grown men.

The 1926 speech instructs Salem tourists to look at the witch trials as an object lesson in the importance of checking the impetuosity and folly of young people, especially young women. In this way, fears of “adolescent rebellion” appear as ahistorical

¹⁴⁷ “Board of Trade Outing,” *Salem Observer* July 25, 1891, n.p.

¹⁴⁸ John D.H. Gauss, *Salem Tercentenary, July 4th to 10th: Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History* (Salem: Salem City Government, 1926), 19.

¹⁴⁹ Foster, *Guide to the North Shore*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Frank A. Manny, Speech, “Rebecca Nurse as Pioneer,” *Rebecca Nurse Association*, Danvers Archival Center.

– the bewitched children were the flappers of the 1690s. This supposed continuity in anarchic femininity perhaps lent urgency to efforts in the 1920s to curb the “wild, ‘abandoned’” young women who took advantage of access to public amusements to dance, smoke, embrace “physical freedom and enhanced sexuality” in ways that made them appear “irresponsible, irreligious, and immoral.”¹⁵¹ If young women’s ungovernability and dangerous visibility in public spaces transcended 1692 and the twentieth century, so too could the destructive consequences of such unruliness.

The manifest failures of their ancestors – often invoked as a source of greatness for men and their communities in the present as noted above– seems to have provoked anxieties in men that their own honor would be tarnished by association with the men in power in 1692. The same minister who condemned patriarchal failures during the witchcraft crisis at the Nurse memorial dedication also consoled his listeners by noting that witch trials had occurred for centuries around Europe and that these had been lost to history. The only reason the ones in Salem gained notoriety was because “these sinners of New England are known in part by the very greatness and value of the work which in other things they wrought. The far-reaching and illustrious results of their lives have made them and their sins to be remembered. And others often that sinned in their day more grievously are forgotten because nothing came of anything that they did.”¹⁵² Furthermore, the descendants of these men did not inherit the shame of 1692: “We do not wish to reproach other men, or the children of other men, with the errors or crimes of

¹⁵¹ Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 134-135.

¹⁵² Upham, *Account*, 21.

their fathers or representatives in former ages... from whatever fathers we are sprung ,we must all desire to draw from the common past the lessons of a better faith and a better present life.”¹⁵³ In this somewhat contradictory formulation, the men of Essex County did not carry the guilt of their antecedents but could take pride in the achievements of their ancestors. As noted by Reverend Charles Rice, speaking at the memorial dedication, in the case of the descendants of witchcraft “martyrs” and their defenders their “inheritance in families of personal character.”¹⁵⁴ Evidently only the good characteristics of their seventeenth-century ancestors were hereditary. This suggests an anxiety about the desire of men in nineteenth and early twentieth century Massachusetts to point to their ancestors as a source of present pride and greatness, but also a concern that they might carry the taint of their misdeeds as well. Rice attempts to reconcile these legacies by asserting that the men of Essex County carried on with the achievements of their ancestors, and it was in fact their positive qualities that allowed Massachusetts men to “learn from their errors” and build a society predicated upon “justice and charity and love among all men.”¹⁵⁵

Reconciling the culpability of white male elites in the trials of 1692 while also rehabilitating the honor and reputation of Salem’s patriarchs down the generations formed the central issue in interpreting 1692 for tourists. Salem elites and tourist boosters needed to develop narrative strategies that would allow them to critique particular patriarchs for their actions without tarnishing their own positionality or delegitimizing white patriarchy as a whole. A common strategy entailed citing the expertise of

¹⁵³ Upham, *Account*, 21-22.

¹⁵⁴ Upham, *Account*, 18, 21-22.

¹⁵⁵ Upham, *Account*, 17, 22.

traditional patriarchal authority figures – lawyers, intellectuals, and the Bible itself – as evidence that Salem men had in fact behaved in accordance with normative sources of white masculine authority. A 1937 edition of the *Visitor's Guide to Salem* is typical when it states that witchcraft was a “universally held” belief derived from the Biblical injunction (quoted in the guide) “thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”¹⁵⁶ Visitors learned that “the judges acted under English law and were appointed by the Provincial Governor,” and that “in New England and particularly in Essex county, we must judge from the vantage ground of 1692 and not of 1890. The trials were conducted in accordance with rules laid down by Chief Justice Hale and other able English jurists” after witchcraft beliefs and prosecutions had taken place in Europe for centuries on the basis of English common law and royal decrees.¹⁵⁷ Even in New England, witch trials were rare and seldom involved more than one or two individuals.¹⁵⁸ This explanation neglects that the period of most active witchcraft persecutions in Europe preceded the Salem Witch Trials by decades, declining in the 1660s.¹⁵⁹ A speech given at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse monument was even more emphatic, noting that:

in past ages the whole world, heathen and Christian, received and believed it, as a truth. It was the fixed and fundamental belief, especially of Christian nations, for more than a thousand years... Sir Matthew Hale in a charge to a jury at Bury in England, in 1664, only twenty-eight years before the Salem tragedy, said ‘Witchcraft is true – first, because Scripture affirms it, and second, all nations, England especially, have provided laws against it.’ The testimony and teachings of such illustrious men concerning witchcraft cannot be set aside nor dismissed

¹⁵⁶ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1937), 16.

¹⁵⁷ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Eben Putnam, Publisher, 1892), 3; *Pocket Guide to Salem* (Salem: H.P. Ives, 1883); Benjamin D. Hill and Winfield S. Nevins, *An Illustrated Guide to the North Shore of Massachusetts Bay* (Salem: Salem Observer Steam Press, 1880).

¹⁵⁸ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Alan Kors, “Introduction,” in *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 2.

with a sneer or a jeer about their credibility or credulity. They were not ignorant nor servile, nor vicious. Their minds were not filled ‘with images distorted and diabolical like gargoyles which looked down upon them from the old cathedrals.’ They were men capable of the highest thought, the closest reasoning; well-versed in divinity, the law, and literature...If it meant this to such men, unquestionably the most learned and remarkable of their generation, what must have been its meaning to the unlearned and servile, the common people.¹⁶⁰

In this formulation, the expertise of great men is shown to be inherently validating and self-perpetuating; it was only natural that magistrates and ministers in 1692 would follow the teachings of prior generations of great men who were best positioned to know best. At the same time, however, this left nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel writers to struggle to affirm the inherent validity of elite male opinions and institutions in a historical space where the things that should have prevented social breakdown – patriarchy, law, and Protestant religion – could be seen to have intensified the crisis of 1692. Perhaps at the turn of the century this unease about the stability and legitimacy of the tools of white bourgeois male power in 1692 allowed visitors to negotiate similar anxieties in their present moment, amidst rising immigration, reform movements, and rapid social, political, and economic transformations.

At the same time, however, some writers worried that the actions that New England patriarchs took on the grounds of their religious and educational expertise might delegitimize these as an adequate basis for white bourgeois masculinity’s place at the top of the social scale. M.V.B. Perley, who wrote a number of local histories and genealogies, wrote in a souvenir guide to 1692 that “though men of education, religion, titled dignity, and official station, of the professions and the elite, were responsible for

¹⁶⁰ William P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument* (Salem: Salem Press, 1886), 7-8.

the horrible catastrophe [sic], and in one instance or more forced the yeoman jurors to convict...religion and education must not be undervalued; a religious education will yield the highest type of manhood.”¹⁶¹ In his view, gentlemen with a good education and career naturally belonged in positions of power and influence, not the “yeoman” of lower orders. Although proper relationships of authority went awry in 1692, Perley is anxious that the prerogatives of classed masculinity not be challenged on a systemic level.

A 1936 souvenir guide even stated that “those responsible for the hangings may be pardoned in the light of their Puritanical religious zeal.”¹⁶² Here, religious devotion provides an understandable motive for men’s actions in 1692 and positions them as good men misguided in the application of their faith. By claiming that Puritans acted on an excess of religious enthusiasm, Christian faith as a basis for action is upheld as good and redemptive even in the case of the witch trials; the real issue was not religious authorities or Protestantism itself but rather an excess of religious passion on the part of seventeenth-century men. Men visiting Salem in 1936 could assure themselves of historical progress and the rightness of modern masculinity by practicing a much more temperate, enlightened form of Protestant Christianity. By condemning an overzealous application of religious belief but ultimately upholding it as a worthy mode of living one’s life, twentieth-century travel writers validated modern New England masculine values: Christian, rational, moderate in their emotions, and judicious in their actions.

¹⁶¹ M.V.B. Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft Trials Illustrated by a Verbatim Report of the Trial of Mrs. Elizabeth Howe* (Salem: M.V.B. Perley, 1911), 4.

¹⁶² *An Illustrated Souvenir Guide to Salem, Massachusetts* (Salem: 1936), 8.

Emphasizing how generational white male expertise resulted in manifest error and tragedy might suggest that white patriarchy was not an ideal means of organizing hierarchy and governance. Travel writers assured visitors that this was not the case. While they cited theology and the law as justifications for patriarchs' actions in 1692, some writers also represented participants in the witch trials as operating outside the usual bounds of the law. For instance, in his 1911 guide to witchcraft, Perley explained that New Englanders believed in witches and prosecuted them on the basis of biblical antiquity, subsequent theology, legal precedent, and the expertise of scholars including the "prince of astronomers" Tycho Brahe.¹⁶³ At the same time, however, Perley wrote that "the trials were unique. The court was without authority; none of the judges, it was said, were bred to the law; evidence was arbitrarily admitted or excluded; the accused were not allowed counsel in the law or the consolation of clergy in religion."¹⁶⁴ Again, this suggests a great deal of unease about the potential to question the bases of white patriarchal power. In formulations like Perley's, the witch trials resulted not from institutional failure or any sort of danger posed by such a narrow slice of the population holding a monopoly on social, political, legal, and economic authority for generations, but from illegitimate interlopers stepping into these spaces and using the instruments of patriarchal power (religion and the law) improperly. This legitimizes white patriarchy in two ways. First, the intellectual and moral rightness of patriarchal knowledge and authority are upheld as right and necessary for social order. Second, the need for these

¹⁶³ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*, 9-11.

¹⁶⁴ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*, 4.

male elites in positions of power such as judgeships is underlined; if the right men with the right backgrounds and the right education are not in control, institutions will not work as they ought and disorder will be the result.

Indeed, a number of travel guides suggest that the men of Salem, though acting under a delusion, did so on the basis of a sincere conviction that they defended their families and communities from witches and the Devil. Judges in 1692 prosecuted witches because “they had the suffering girls before them, and an infuriated populace around them, inspired with a terrible religious determination to stamp out the damnable business which they believed to be the work of the devil himself.”¹⁶⁵ In this way, Salem men acted in accordance with patriarchal imperatives to protect their dependents and their homes from attacks. This insistence by some travel writers that Salem’s patriarchs acted in their capacities as heads of households and civic leaders in order to rid their communities of the “emissaries of the devil” again highlights a tension around the fact that elite white men perpetrated an injustice against mostly white women and other socially vulnerable persons, including children and the elderly – essentially, those most entitled to patriarchal safekeeping. By emphasizing that Salem men saw these victims as powerful instruments of Satan menacing good, Christian women and children, boosters again sought to rehabilitate their reputations by aligning their actions with their responsibilities of fathers and public leaders.¹⁶⁶ The actions of magistrates and ministers in 1692, while misguided

¹⁶⁵ *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903), n.p.

¹⁶⁶ *Pocket Guide to Salem* (Salem: H.P. Ives, 1883), 11.

and tragic, stemmed from common (and legitimate, as shown above) beliefs of the time not unmanly malice or spite.

Travel writers also sought to rehabilitate Massachusetts masculinity by pointing towards men who exemplified more traditionally heroic masculinity through courage, reason, and strong principle throughout the witchcraft crisis. Writers asserted that tourists should view those who “declined to save themselves through compromise or equivocation” as evidence of the worth and strength of character of New England antecedents.¹⁶⁷ The Essex Institute also noted, for instance in a 1902 visitor’s guide, that “a few of the judges, Saltonstall among them, set their faces against the whole proceeding. A few simple towns-folk, like the neighbors of Rebecca Nurse, braved public hostility, at large risk of character and standing, and tried to screen the victims.”¹⁶⁸ In this way, visitors could be assured that worthy ancestors of nineteenth- and twentieth-century white men existed and that the judges and other male elites who participated in the trials could not be taken as representative of all their class. Emphasizing the moral fortitude of other patriarchs in the face of injustice provided a more straightforwardly heroic lineage legitimizing bourgeois white patriarchy as the ultimate repository of order and honor.

In particular, visitor guides pointed to Giles Corey as an example of a man who actively denounced the unjust actions of the court and went defiantly to his death. Corey, an eighty-year-old wealthy landowner in Salem, had actually initially been a vocal supporter of witchcraft persecutions and even spoke against his own wife, Martha, when

¹⁶⁷ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1937), 9.

¹⁶⁸ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 4.

she was tried and ultimately executed. Corey later renounced his participation in the witch trials and came under suspicion of witchcraft himself. By this point, he had also gained a reputation for being difficult, disdainful of others, and violent; he beat one of his hired laborers so badly that the man later died of his injuries in 1675.¹⁶⁹ At his trial for witchcraft, Corey pled not guilty and then refused to cooperate further with the court, standing mute rather than acceding to a jury trial or acknowledge the legitimacy of the courts to try him. The court ultimately ordered him to be pressed to death. According to popular tradition since, Corey's last words were "more weight," a taunt to his executioners.¹⁷⁰ Corey's popularity in tourist narratives likely derived in no small part from the odd and torturous manner of his death, but his defiance also allowed him to be constructed as a valiant martyr who not only denounced injustice but actively resisted the legal proceedings against him.

From the 1880s, the approximate site of Corey's death operated as a fixture on Salem's tourist landscape with Corey himself touted as an exemplar of New England masculinity. Needless to say, this entailed eliding stories about how Corey had been a foul-tempered man believed by many to have gotten away with murder, and who had alienated many in his community. Many writers also failed to mention his deposition against his wife in her witchcraft trial. Instead, he appeared straightforwardly as an embodiment of male virtue. The description of Corey's death in the *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs* from 1897 is typical:

¹⁶⁹ See Baker *A Storm of Witchcraft*.

¹⁷⁰ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Henry P. Ives, 1880).

Among those accused was a man, Giles Corey, who refused to plead because he felt that the court was so constituted that if he pleaded, not guilty, he would surely be condemned, and although he knew that a plea of guilty would save his life he would not swear falsely in order to escape a death sentence. The old English law provided that one who refused to plead would be pressed until a plea was made or life destroyed, and therefore Corey was bound and placed prostrate on the earth; and great rocks were heaped upon his chest until he could hardly breathe. He not only refused to plead but told the officers to increase the weight, for death was the only way to end the matter, as he would never say guilty or not guilty. And thus he perished.¹⁷¹

In this narrative of his life, Corey exhibits moral courage by refusing to lie, denounces injustice and illegitimate uses of authority, remains active throughout his ordeal by challenging the courts and his executioners, and is physically brave by remaining resolute under torture and taunting his killers with his last words. By portraying Corey in this way and praising him as evidence of strong conviction in New England men, writers retained these qualities as hallmarks of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant bourgeois masculinity. Although many elite men in Salem perpetrated a tragedy in 1692, they should not be taken as representatives of all Salem patriarchs.

When guides did acknowledge the less palatable aspects of Corey's character by mentioning the role he had played in convicting Martha Corey, they typically did so in a way that made Corey's story one of a redemptive martyrdom. One guide to Salem, for instance, speculates that Corey willingly went to his death to "expiate the wrong done for his worthy wife."¹⁷² Similarly, in her guide to witchcraft, Henrietta Kimball described how Corey, "seeing the wickedness of the whole proceedings...had not hesitated to

¹⁷¹ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*, 6.

¹⁷² *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1937), 20.

confess his error and denounce what had been done.”¹⁷³ In these versions of his biography, Corey’s reason and conscience prevail over superstition and error, allowing him to exhibit moral and physical vigor in order to make amends for his errors and die a martyr. Critically, as will be discussed in the next chapter, travel writers tended to reserve this capacity for redemption to Corey and other white male actors like Judge Samuel Sewall, “who to the end of his life, did yearly penance in the Old South meeting-house at Boston for his part in the transaction, clearly saw the thing in its hideous proportions.”¹⁷⁴ This version of masculinity is initially not ideal, but their ability to redeem themselves through the expression of normative male traits underscores the importance of these for masculine performance. When Corey, and by extension men in general, fail to uphold these values, disorder results. However, they are also shown to have the capacity to recognize their failures and overcome them through the assertion of normative masculinity.

Interpretation and commemoration around Rebecca Nurse tend to highlight the heroic actions of the men in her family and community. This is likely due in a large part to the role that descendants of Rebecca Nurse and her sisters (Mary Easty, also executed as a witch, and Sarah Cloyce, who was accused but survived) have played, driving her commemoration and interpretation in Danvers through the preservation of her homestead, the installation of memorials on her property, and publications such as *Rebecca Nurse: Saint But Witch Victim* in 1930.¹⁷⁵ However, efforts by the Nurse family to sanctify their

¹⁷³ Henrietta D. Kimball, *Witchcraft Illustrated* (Boston: G.A. Kimball, 1892), 12.

¹⁷⁴ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 4.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Sullivan Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse: Saint but Witch Victim* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1930).

ancestor was not just an effort to glorify their own lineage but rather part of a larger memory project of highlighting exemplary colonial antecedents that would instill public morality and ensure a strong future for the region and the nation. As vice president of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial Association Benjamin B. Nourse stated in a speech at the dedication of his ancestor's memorial, "the greatness of the future will be in great measure determined by what men and women do to-day, as our present attainment is the result of what faithful ones have fought for and won in all the ages. Thus we are acting for posterity."¹⁷⁶ By commemorating the actions of Nurse and her family, her descendants affirmed their honor and decency as a lineage but also positioned their ancestry as the ancestry of New England; anyone visiting the memorial would learn about the piety, industriousness, and filial loyalty that allowed the Nurses to colonize early New England, withstand the upheaval of 1692, go on to build modern Massachusetts and continue the traditions of their region's founders.

In early interpretation and memorialization, Rebecca Nurse's sons illustrated white bourgeois male excellence by exhibiting moral agency in retrieving their mother's body, giving her a proper Christian burial worthy of her pious lifestyle, and going on to farm the family's property in filial harmony and Jeffersonian excellence. Unlike the problematic magistrates and ministers involved in the witch trials, the Nurse sons offered a more straightforward model of masculine virtue for tourists and descendants to emulate. At a speech given at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse memorial, her descendant Benjamin Nourse described how:

¹⁷⁶ Upham, *Account*, 34.

Her manly sons, full of filial affection, braved the excitement of the time, and under cover of the darkness of the night succeeding that eventful day, secretly and silently approached the dismal place to which the bodies of the victims had been consigned, carefully sought out, tenderly bore her dead body away and gave it a resting place in the family burial lot at the old homestead. Such an act of true filial affection deserves more than a mere mention here to-day. It deserves a place of record cut deep upon the same stone erected to the memory of that beloved mother.¹⁷⁷

Nurse's sons subsequently divided the farm she had built with her husband peaceably between them and lived out their lives as virtuous, industrious farmers. This should be seen as a testament to the excellence of the "affection" of the family and good parenting.¹⁷⁸ Here, the standards of nineteenth century masculinity are clearly delineated: active, brave, loyal, family-minded, Christian, and sensible in the face of delusion and injustice. The prominence of Nurse's sons in this narrative, as well as the assertion that their actions in burying her were equally as worthy of memorialization as her bravery in the face of persecution and death, points to the importance of having worthy male ancestors. Nurse's Christian virtue inspired her sons, but ultimately the men of the family could take action and put her example into action by building a moral, industrious future for Massachusetts. This is reflected elsewhere in publications such as Katherine Abbotts' travel guides, where she states that "We are fain to believe that the suspected witches were women of unusual strength of character. Behold, in succeeding generations, what heroes Danvers sent to the front!"¹⁷⁹ These actions by men of the Revolutionary generation would "redeem" Salem for 1692. Again, women's morality and strength of

¹⁷⁷ Upham, *Account*, 32.

¹⁷⁸ Upham, *Account*, 23.

¹⁷⁹ Abbot, *Old Paths*, 168.

character formed a well-spring which allowed men to make the actual achievements of the region and become exemplary citizens.

As will be discussed below, descriptions of Nurse herself portray her in passive terms as a saintly figure who inspired others by her example but did not agitate against her prosecution and eventual execution. Instead, her sons act on her behalf. This reinforces a traditional model of white bourgeois family relations in which the mother exists as the moral center of her household and raises sons to be active, goodly citizens. The horror of the Salem Witch Trials stemmed in a large part, in early interpretation, from the breakdown of this kind of family model in households like the Parris's. As noted above, in the face of changing domestic patterns, migration, and gender roles around the turn of the twentieth century, white middle-class Americans highlighted the traditional gendered values of the Nurse families as well as the prominence of their descendants to instill in visitors the idea that New England's social stability and "future greatness" would be assured as long as traditional values were maintained.

Interpreters beyond the Nurse family took up the examples of her sons and neighbors as evidence of Salem's capacity for reason and decency even in the face of the witchcraft crisis. The 1902 Essex Institute travel guide noted that they "braved public hostility, at large risk of character and standing, and tried to screen the victims," for instance, while a 1950 guide to the North Shore described how Nurse's "kinfolk spirited the body away to bury it in secret."¹⁸⁰ By glorifying Nurse, her family, and her neighbors

¹⁸⁰ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 4; Howard Foster, *Guide to the North Shore* (Marblehead: North Shore Publishers, 1950), 11.

for their actions in 1692, and idealizing their earlier lives of colonial morality, simplicity, and hardiness, descendants provided an illustrious lineage for themselves but also for locals who could point to the Nurses as examples of noble colonial ancestors who laid the foundations for the region. As noted in a guide to Salem in 1901, it was their “ideals of character which were the Puritans' finest legacy to the generations of to-day.”¹⁸¹ The stories of the Nurses, Corey, and the others who resisted the legal proceedings legitimized the authority of white patriarchy by providing a moral (and sometimes literal) lineage for nineteenth and twentieth century white men.

Tourist guides from the nineteenth century through the 1950s often concluded that the martyrs willing to die for their ideals and challenge injustice and those Salemites who awakened from their delusion and freed accused witches from prison in 1693 ushered in a modern world predicated on the enlightened governance of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant manhood. For instance, a guide noted in 1897 that the 1693 jail delivery marked “the breaking away from the dark delusion throughout the world.”¹⁸² The Chamber of Commerce informed visitors in their 1940 visitor’s guide that Salem men “excluded witchcraft as a triable offence, a reform not effected elsewhere for nearly a century.”¹⁸³ Another guide noted that “some regard those outrageous incidents as a blot on the history of Salem, but those who have studied conditions existing at that time realize that the Salem Witchcraft Delusion was the means of ridding a superstitious world of such executions for all time.”¹⁸⁴ Because Salemites erred not out of malice but out of a sincere

¹⁸¹ AG Woodman, "Historic Salem: Illustrations by the Author" Vol 2 No. 1 January 1901.

¹⁸² *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1897), 32.

¹⁸³ *Historic Salem, Massachusetts* (Salem: Salem Chamber of Commerce, 1940).

¹⁸⁴ J. Frank Reynolds, *The Compass: An Illustrated Souvenir Guide to Salem, Mass.* (Salem, 1926), 8.

belief in reason, faith, and Western law, white men's innate rationality and moral uprightness ultimately enabled Salem patriarchs to throw off millennia of superstition and religious excess to usher in a new age of reason. The witch trials could be seen as a moment that ushered in a modern, enlightened American masculinity predicated upon rationality, piety but not zealotry, and justness. In this way, white patriarchy is ultimately upheld as necessary for social order. In throwing off an outdated, early modern form of manhood, reasserting command over women and children, and never returning to such disorder the patriarchs of Salem demonstrated that modern patriarchy worked as the source for long-term social stability.

Xenophobia

A common refrain in tourist literature from this early period of witchcraft tourism asserted that most of the men who led the Salem Witch Trials were not, in fact, men from Salem. Instead, they were interlopers from other communities around Boston and New England. Thus, the honor of Salem's men had not really been compromised because the actual blame for the catastrophe came from outside their town. One travel guide insisted that "the majority of them who conducted the trials were not from Salem," for instance.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, the 1890 edition of the *North Shore* travel guide asserted that "the delusion of 1692 did not start in Salem proper, but in the Salem Village parish, now Danvers Centre; one of the nineteen persons executed for witchcraft only three belonged in Salem," most of those involved in the trials as accusers and accused came from present-day Danvers

¹⁸⁵ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Eben Putnam, Publisher, 1892), 3.

and other towns around Massachusetts and Maine, not Salem proper. Indeed, “not only did the delusion begin in the Village but nearly all the complaints came from there, even of those living as far away as Boston, and Wells, Maine. Very few people of the town of Salem had any part in the business.”¹⁸⁶ While subsequent scholarship certainly validates the idea that the 1692 witch trials constituted a regional crisis as result of initial suspicions of bewitchment in the Parris household in Danvers (then Salem Village), the framing of these statements in early travel literature suggests a desire to shift blame for the witch trials to outsiders to the community.¹⁸⁷ Essentially, the honor of Salem had been besmirched unfairly by the actions of other towns’ men.

Some travel guides from the 1920s went beyond shifting blame from Salemites to community outsiders to blaming immigrants and cultural outsiders in general. In the face of skyrocketing immigration between the 1870s and 1920s, travel guides reinforced the importance of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant patriarchy specifically by emphasizing the worse errors and superstitions held by blaming the witch trials on an inferior class of immigrants disrupting the social order. According to a pageant performed at the 1926 Salem tercentennial celebrations, amidst a decade of particularly intense nativism and anti-Catholic fervor, “Socially the town was a far different makeup from the original hard-working, well-educated pioneer group. Immigration had been rapid and indiscriminate in the last generation. The 'mob' was an excitable one.”¹⁸⁸ This description

¹⁸⁶ Hill and Nevins, *An Illustrated Guide to the North Shore of Massachusetts Bay*, 22.

¹⁸⁷ See Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*; and Ray, *Satan and Salem*.

¹⁸⁸ Nellie Stearns Messer, *A Pageant-Drama of Salem* (Salem: Newcomb and Gauss, 1926), 14; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 264-299.

of undesirable foreigners could just as easily be found in contemporary xenophobic characterizations of nineteenth and twentieth century immigrants as undesirable, illiterate and unintelligent, men of the “lowest class...and men of the meaner sort...men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy no any initiative of quick intelligence.”¹⁸⁹ The use of the word “mob” to describe these undesirable migrants seems particularly notable given the rise of crowd psychology in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The witchcraft “hysteria” of 1692 could map easily over fears of mass hysteria in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as theorists such as Gustave le Bon conceptualized crowd psychology. They argued that people lost their sense of individuation, morality, and judgment in a crowd, instead submitting to the dominant feeling or idea of the masses. This feeling would be primal, anarchic, and destructive.¹⁹⁰ By the 1920s, the “psychology of crowds” circulated in American discourse as a means of pathologizing mass action and mass protest undertaken by the working class and immigrants.¹⁹¹

Fears in witchcraft tourism that changing demographics would wreak havoc on the morals, culture, and social stability of the United States appear valid and vital in this presentation. Specifically, it upheld fears by a dominant White class that collective action undertaken by workers and immigrants were inherently “criminal, pathological, or

¹⁸⁹ Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1902), 212-213, quoted in Desmond King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 52.

¹⁹⁰ See Robert A. Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave le Bon and the Crisis of Mass Democracy in the Third Republic* (London: Sage Publications, 1975).

¹⁹¹ See Eugene E. Leach, “‘Mental Epidemics’: Crowd Psychology and American Culture, 1890-1940,” *American Studies* 33 (1992), 5-29.

degenerate.”¹⁹² It fell incumbent upon “Anglo-Saxon males...to become the brains of a complex and volatile society that included women, children, and mongrel breeds.”¹⁹³ The Salem tercentennial pageant clearly articulated the qualities that defined the sort of White Protestant New Englander required for such work: industrious, rational and educated, bourgeois, and, as shown below, white and Protestant. Furthermore, by locating origins of the region’s prosperity and cultural greatness in the earliest white English colonists, those involved in the tercentennial effaced the labor and cultural importance of generations of immigrants who revitalized Salem’s post-maritime economy in mills and factories.¹⁹⁴ The framing of a tercentenary celebration – celebrating and defining Salem’s history and identity – underscored how immigrants might come into the region, but they could not completely belong to it. They did not contribute to the growth of the region, they threatened it and inhibited progress.

Notably, many of the immigrants to New England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from Catholic countries. Salem’s population grew to approximately 26,000 in 1875 as immigrants from French Canada, Ireland, Poland, and Italy moved into new tenements and working class neighborhoods to work, a population which reached 36,000 by 1915.¹⁹⁵ Such an influx threatened New Englanders’ constructions of their region as a bastion of Anglo-Saxon homogeneity, whose Protestant religion and cultural values inherited from their English colonial ancestors formed the

¹⁹² Leach, “Mental Epidemics,” 13.

¹⁹³ Leach, “Mental Epidemics,” 6.

¹⁹⁴ Aviva Chomsky, “Salem as Global City,” in *Salem*, Morrison and Schultz, 219-228.

¹⁹⁵ Chomsky, “Salem as Global City,” 221.

essence of the American character; in fact, Anglo-Saxon stock, or at a minimum the ability to assimilate into Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture, became “necessary conditions for citizenship.”¹⁹⁶ Two years before Salem put on its nativist tercentennial celebration, the United States established strict quotas for immigrants according to the desirability of their region of origin, with Catholic and Jewish immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe curtailed particularly harshly and East Asian immigration excluded.¹⁹⁷ This Protestantism was “inherent to the United States...[and] was linked fundamentally to the ‘Englishness’ of the original settlers.”¹⁹⁸ To many nativist New Englanders and tourists, Catholicism seemed inherently foreign and incompatible with assimilation into American culture or participation in democratic government.¹⁹⁹

Class

The Salem Witch Trials served in many ways as a moment of class horror for nineteenth- and twentieth-century tourists, used as a means of negotiating anxieties about the disruption of social rank in the United States. As noted above, commentators strove not just to uphold the legitimacy of white male power in general, but to naturalize the authority of upper middle-class white men. White bourgeois Americans viewed themselves as being intrinsically moral and upright in character by virtue of their class status.²⁰⁰ Their possession of these qualities rendered them particularly fit to wield

¹⁹⁶ King, *Making Americans*, 18-27.

¹⁹⁷ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 207.

¹⁹⁸ King, *Making Americans*, 17.

¹⁹⁹ King, *Making Americans*, 22; Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 201-206; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 5-6, 77-96, 175-182, 264-299.

²⁰⁰ See Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*.

political and social influence in American life. The Salem Witch Trials epitomized the dangers of having this class system disrupted. Social organization in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America taught that maintaining a genteel social standing and cultivating a good reputation would inculcate individuals from harm and ensure their ability to exercise agency. In narratives of 1692, however, lower class colonists could wield the law against their social superiors and taint them with scandal and low character. This usurpation of class prerogatives served as a particular source of shock and horror for many tourists as well as the boosters who sold them a tale of 1692. For instance, Charles Huse wrote in his travel diary in 1899 that the witch trials reached an appalling scale when Salem “lost some of her best sons and imprisoned many more whose character and position should have placed them far above suspicion.”²⁰¹ Here, Huse depicts morality and authority as inherently classed. If it was unnatural that those with “position” would be associated with witchcraft, the Devil, and unruliness, then by implication these qualities were more rightly located primarily in lower-class persons. Because disorder and loose morality could most often be ascribed to the lower-classes, they seem the more natural targets for charges of witchcraft. This naturalizes assumptions that issues of class, morals, and social value were mutually reinforcing and that those of a low socio-economic standing or disreputable character make for particularly likely victims as a result of their socio-economic status and attendant virtuous bourgeois morality. For Huse and others, the real shock of the witch trials was not that seventeenth-century people “deluded by the beliefs” of their time accused and executed suspected witches, but that

²⁰¹ Charles Huse, *Charles Phillips Huse Diary*. Diary. Ms. N-2350. Massachusetts Historical Society.

these charges broke down class barriers and tainted elites with associations and consequences that ought to have been reserved for the lower classes.

Indeed, in several recountings of the witch trials, New Englanders became conscious of the scale of the witch trials and began to reimpose order when upper class residents, “persons of the highest character and respectability were accused and brought to trial” and the court upheld stricter standards of evidence, prohibiting the use of spectral evidence, thereby hastening the end of the trials.²⁰² The unnaturalness of such associations galvanized the public to take action to end the witch trials and “awakened them” to the fact that they had been acting under a delusion. For these travel writers and tourists, middle-class white people embodied character, respectability, and rightful authority. In order for society to function, white bourgeois people needed to be the ones exercising power.

Tituba

Travel writers invested many of their fears of immigration, race, and unstable Anglo-Saxon hegemony in the figure of Tituba, an enslaved indigenous woman from South America – possibly Arawak – owned by Samuel Parris and brought to Massachusetts with him from his plantation in Barbados.²⁰³ Witchcraft tourism constructed her as the source of the delusion of 1692, scapegoating her for bringing superstitious magic into New England, warping the minds of the white girls under her

²⁰² *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1937), 25.

²⁰³ See Breslaw, *Tituba*.

care in the Parris households until they fell under the afflictions that invited the first claims of witchcraft in Salem, and providing testimony that led to the first convictions. The salient point of Tituba's background for travel writers since the mid-nineteenth century has been her racial and cultural otherness – depictions of her variously portray her as Black, indigenous, Indian, or multi-racial. Writers have deployed particular ethnic identifications according to the racial anxieties of a historical moment. For writers in the 1920s inspired by nativist anxiety, Tituba's infusion of superstition, derived from her roots in indigenous culture and Spanish colonial regions, exemplified the dangers of Catholic influence and foreignness to stable Yankee homogeneity. According to travel narratives, Protestants in seventeenth century New England believed in witchcraft on the basis of the Bible and centuries of legal tradition, but the descriptions of particular magical acts by Tituba are positioned as especially pagan. A souvenir guide in 1911, for instance, stated that: "Mr. Parris brought with him from the Spanish Main, as his slaves, a couple called John Indian and his wife, Tituba. The ignorance of the Spanish population found its summit of pleasure in dancing, singing, sleight of hand, palmistry, fortune-telling, magic, and necromancy (or spirit communication with the dead); and John and his Tituba in all those things were fully up to date."²⁰⁴ The guide identified these magical rituals as inherent to the Spanish, echoing Protestant contempt for the rites of the Catholic Church, often seen as superstition and pagan themselves with its mysterious rites and clergy.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*, 18.

²⁰⁵ Patrick Allitt, "Ambiguous Welcome: The Protestant Response to American Catholics," in *Roman Catholicism in the United States: A Thematic History* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 21-42; King, *Making Americans*, 18-27.

By emphasizing Tituba's cultural otherness, writers upheld the supremacy of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, which had been identified as the basis of civilization and modernity by the turn of the century.²⁰⁶ Superstition and acts of magic came not from within Protestant society but was brought in by a dangerous cultural outsider. The fact that the enslaved Tituba had been brought to New England against her will went unremarked upon. An edition of *What to See in Salem* rather spectacularly exacerbated slippages in Tituba's racial identification by portraying her as a "brown-skinned...Hindoo," but nevertheless notes that she brought along the "arts and conjuring" for which Hindu adherents were known.²⁰⁷ Superstition and actual magical acts came from without New England, from a religion other than Protestantism. Other programs such as a 1926 Salem Tercentenary guide condemned Tituba for bringing this list of "Spanish superstitions" to New England or more concisely just blamed her for being "imbued with the superstition of her former home."²⁰⁸ Casting Tituba's supposed cultural practices as magic condemns entire Catholic and indigenous belief systems as dangerous and unmodern. Tourism layered post-colonial fears and imaginings, intermingling anxieties about an infusion of immigrants and their cultures, indigeneity, imperial rivalries in Latin America, and the mutability of cultural and racial categories in Tituba. Notably Americans of Northern European origin tended to construct Catholics from Ireland, Eastern Europe, and Southern Europe as possessing a lesser form of whiteness. Tituba, figured either as an Indian from India or an indigenous woman from the "Spanish

²⁰⁶ See Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; King, *Making Americans*; Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*.

²⁰⁷ *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903), n.p.

²⁰⁸ Gauss, *Salem Tercentenary, July 4th to 10th: Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History*, 19; *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 27.

Main” also posed a racialized threat to white New England society. Travel writers bolstered notions that racial and cultural threats were mutually reinforcing. Aligning her racial status and the suspect nature so closely with her cultural identity as an “other” reinforced notions of New England as inherently white and Protestant, positioning all people of color as inherently antithetical to Massachusetts’ identity and modernity, as discussed in more detail below. Fears that these immigrants would corrupt American society had validation and a historical precedent in 1692.

Identifying Tituba by her non-white skin color invoked long-standing cultural confluences of Black and indigenous cultures with immorality and outright diabolism. Referring to people of color as “black” or “dark” has its origins in this colonial period, when white New Englanders applied these descriptions to Native Americans to mark them as sources of fear, disorder, and diabolic evil in contrast to an emerging sense of white, male, “civilized” Englishness. Historians such as Kim Hall and Kathleen Brown have demonstrated that in early modern English “dark” and “light” had moral dimensions, signifying sin, death, ignorance, and debasement versus purity, godliness, beauty, civilization, rationality, and goodness. As the English came into increasingly close contact with Africans and Native Americans through trade and settler colonialism, they racialized this qualitative polarity, associating lightness with their own Caucasian skin tones and applied the dangerous connotations of the “dark” to the black and indigenous persons they lived alongside. This moralized bifurcation of black and white, dark and light would be continuously reinscribed as ideas of race evolved in the modern

Euro-American world to justify white supremacist power relations, slavery, and colonial violence.²⁰⁹

This was certainly the case in New England where, as historian Mary Beth Norton has shown, many of the individuals involved in the witch trials saw the devil's hand at work in New England not only through witches but also through Native Americans. Generally, English colonists associated Indians with the devil and devil worship, equating shamans with witches. Puritans cast themselves as chosen by God to claim the land from these diabolical people. Seventeenth-century New Englanders referred to devils and indigenous peoples alike as "black men," and indeed the Devil often appeared in the guise of a Native man.²¹⁰ Cotton Mather referred to Native Americans as "devils" and wrote in his treatise on witchcraft that this diabolic black man "resembles an Indian," while a witness in the 1689 Hartford witch trials testified that he saw an accused witch consorting with creatures "like two Indians."²¹¹ We also see this association in Salem, for instance when the accused witch Sarah Osborne testified that she herself suffered bewitchment. She testified that "she was frightened one time in her sleep and either saw or dreamed that she saw a thing like an Indian all black which did pinch her in her neck and pulled her by the back part of her head to the door of the house."²¹² During the proceedings against George Burroughs, a former minister of Salem who lived in Maine at

²⁰⁹ See Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1-24, 177-268 and Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and English Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²¹⁰ See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 54-55, 58.

²¹¹ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 58

²¹² "Examination of Sarah Osborn as Recorded by John Hathorne," *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, University of Virginia, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n95.html>

the time of his arrest, witnesses claimed to have seen Williams tormented by spirits that appeared as “a black woman and [an] Indian.”²¹³ Abigail Hobbs, another former resident of Maine, used to meet with the Devil on the edge of Abenaki territory while conspiring with Burroughs. Ann Putnam claimed that Burroughs conspired with the Devil to bewitch and kill English soldiers fighting the Abenaki in Maine.²¹⁴ These two agents of the devil – witches and Native Americans – were united in their work to undermine the godly Englishmen of Massachusetts. Thus, since the time of the trials themselves, Salemites have conflated the Prince of Darkness, the darkness of a frightening colonial landscape, moral darkness, and the relative darkness of indigenous skin tones and culture.

Early scholars of Salem witchcraft, particularly Charles Upham and Sidney Perley, singled out Tituba for blame in beginning the Salem Witch Trials by playing up racist assumptions that Native Americans were especially occult and, when not properly checked by white men, likely to corrupt white society with their innate guile.²¹⁵ According to Upham, New Englanders accepted that God and the Devil directly influenced events on earth and took the existence of witches as fact. However, it was Tituba with her “wild and strange superstitions prevalent among [her] native tribe” who “inflamed” Puritan anxieties until they exploded into a witchcraft panic.²¹⁶ Travel guides, newspaper articles, maps, and souvenirs through the twentieth century took Upham’s

²¹³ “Testimony of Benjamin Hutchinson v. George Burroughs,” *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, University of Virginia, <http://saalem.lib.virginia.edu/n22.html>

²¹⁴ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 120-122.

²¹⁵ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*; Charles P. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft, with an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*, vol. 2, (Boston: Wiggin and Lunt, 1867).

²¹⁶ Upham, *Salem*, 2.

work as the foundation of their interpretation of 1692. Consequently, early witchcraft tourism established a popular understanding of the witch trials where the darkest, most disgraceful, chapter in the region's history began at the hand of the dark-skinned Tituba.

This understanding of the Salem Witch Trials – in which a woman of color menaced godly white New Englanders with her innate predispositions towards mischief and superstition – became essential for the earliest travel writers and tourism boosters in Salem seeking to reconcile the most shameful moment of their history with an overall narrative of progress, reason, and the achievements of great white men while also profiting off of interest in the tragedy of 1692. Locating seventeenth-century superstition in Tituba and non-European traditions allowed the stain of irrationality and moral transgression to be shifted away from great New England patriarchs onto people of color. Indeed, the official program for the 1926 tercentenary celebration of Salem's founding offered a bit of nativist wish-fulfillment, stating that if “Tituba [had] been returned to [her] native soil, no doubt the horrible tragedy would have been averted.”²¹⁷ Indeed it was she, not the accusers, witnesses, judges, or ministers involved in the legal proceedings who was the “great author” of 1692.²¹⁸ Magic, malice, and disorder in 1692 took on an embodied form in Tituba, allowing writers and tourists to view these events and ideas as imported into New England rather than an existing part of Anglo-American culture. This also positioned Tituba as the individual wielding true agency in instigating the witch trials; everyone else merely reacted to and got manipulated by her machinations and

²¹⁷ J.D.H. Gauss, *Salem Tercentenary, July 4th to 10th: Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History* (Salem: Salem City Government, 1926), 19.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

could therefore be seen as tragically misguided rather than the source of true evil or mal intent.

In modern retellings, seventeenth-century men might have believed in sorcery on the basis of scholarship and biblical authority, but Tituba actually practiced magic out of ignorance and superstition. Notably, these formulations elide the numerous acts of counter-magic practiced in Puritan New England – such as an instance when the Englishwoman Mary Sibley ordered Tituba to prepare a “witch cake” of rye and the urine of the afflicted children which could be fed to a dog and used to identify the witch bespelling them – that owed more to folk belief than Biblical exegesis.²¹⁹ For instance, travel guides from 1902 and 1937 informed tourists that “it is evident that sorcery was among the accomplishments of Tituba,” while 1897’s *Illustrated History of Salem and Its Environs* stated that it could be “taken for granted” that Tituba brought the “tricks” of the “semi-civilized races” to Massachusetts and “exhibited” them for the soon to be afflicted children.²²⁰ A promotional brochure for the “Old Witch Jail” site suggests that visitors to the city would still see Tituba “flying on her broom in the sickle of the moon,” thereby positioning her as a spectral witch and figure of continued supernatural terror.²²¹ Visitors could also buy souvenir postcards depicting Tituba drawing a magical circle with a wand, the “requisites of the Black Art” before a group of frightened white girls or a china tea set supposedly similar to the ones Tituba would have used to perform magic tricks for the

²¹⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 15. For more on popular belief, religion, and magic in Puritan culture, see Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*.

²²⁰ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 27. *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 17. Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*, 6-7.

²²¹ John Beresford Hatch, *Old Witch Jail* (Salem: 1955), 15.

afflicted girls.²²² This locates actual magic and witchcraft not in Puritan, white tradition but in foreign people of color. This also establishes a qualitative difference in the witchcraft beliefs of white elites – intellectual, held on the basis of legitimate sources of knowledge and measured by reason, and investigated according to the law – and those held by non-whites – ignorant, rooted in superstition, motivated by malice, and conducted in secret out of view from white male authority figures. This is not to say that white authors never described white colonists as having acted out of ignorance or superstition; writers commonly referred to the 1692 crisis as a “terrible delusion” while Daniel Low referred to the trials as the end of a “great superstition that had spread its dismal folds on the world for centuries.”²²³ Critically, however, such beliefs were generally qualified, imputed “to the times” or shown to be driven by theology and legal precedent, as shown above. In these cases, superstition could be overcome and left in the past, rendering white people particularly qualified for modern life and power. Tituba’s superstition, by contrast, was innate to her and to her racial identity. Because of this, Native and Black people could never be fully trusted or brought into the modern world, let alone in positions of authority. By eradicating the sort of superstitious folly embodied by Tituba, and indeed removing her entirely by selling her out of the area in 1693, white patriarchs were the ones who saved Salem – and indeed the colonies as a whole – from backwards beliefs in witchcraft. Because Salem tourism depicted white men as the ultimate source of stability, progress, and order, women of color could only represent moral and intellectual darkness.

²²² “Postcards,” ephemera, Salem State University Special Collections; Pamela E. Apkarian-Russell, *A Collector's Guide to Salem Witchcraft and Souvenirs with Values* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 1998), 39.

²²³ Daniel Low, *Salem Pilgrim* (Salem, 1903), 7.

The distinction in motives for engaging with witchcraft between white actors and Tituba further underscored the necessity for white supremacy. As discussed above, many travel writers argued that white male civic leaders acted misguidedly but out of a desire to protect their communities from agents of the devil or out of fear incited by the symptoms and apparent bewitchment of the afflicted girls. Because of this and white men's innate capacity for reason, they could be brought back around to order and legitimately continue to occupy positions of authority. Tituba's motives for practicing magic and participating in the trials stemmed from maliciousness. A 1937 travel guide claimed that Tituba testified against white women because "she showed a lively imagination and was very clever, confessing enough to implicate others."²²⁴ By contrasting the motivations for white people and people of color participating in the witch trials, travel writers could ameliorate the guilt and the horror of white actors' role in the Salem Witch Trials. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century characterization of colonists as hardy, Godly inspirations to modern Americans could be maintained if people of color could be pointed to as inherently suspect, lacking in morals, and as actively vicious. Tituba essentially functions as the scapegoat for the actions of white New Englanders in 1692.

Portraying Tituba as the ultimate source of corruption not only allowed travel writers to shift the blame for the Salem Witch Trials from white patriarchs but also served as a tool for maintaining the innocence of the white children whose afflictions led

²²⁴ *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1937), 19.

to the first accusations of bewitchment.²²⁵ A guide to the site of the 1692 jail site from 1955, for instance, stated that it was Tituba who “first introduced the practice of witchcraft to Salem” and “hypnotized” the white girls under her care through “ministrations of West Indian black magic, voodism, palmistry, and puppet making.”²²⁶ Here, Tituba took complete control of the girls’ minds and incited their fits and delusions; the girls had absolutely no control over their actions. More typically, travel writers described the girls as young and susceptible to pressures from adults and taken in by novelty. For example, the *Illustrated History of Salem and Its Environs* described the girls as “interested and astonished” in Tituba’s wondrous tricks, and “it being the nature of the young to imitate, they soon tried to astonish their neighbors by going through the peculiar actions, uttering strange cries, and making mysterious signs.”²²⁷ They only began to claim bewitchment out of fear of punishment for participating in forbidden fortune telling. The “could not for a moment realize the terrible consequences which were to follow. Having taken the first step they were in the position of all who take the first step in falsehood or any wrong doing – another step became necessary, and then another.”²²⁸ The girls acted not out of malice, but out of a childish fear of getting in trouble and without any understanding of the implications of their claims of witchcraft. By relating the girls’ actions to those of “all” who told a small lie that spiraled out of their control,

²²⁵ See Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Frank, *Life with Father*.

²²⁶ John Beresford Hatch, *Old Witch Jail and Dungeon: A 1955 Report on One of America’s Greatest Tragedies 1692 to 1693* (Salem: John Beresford Hatch, 1955), 8.

²²⁷ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*, 7.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

the guide positioned tourists in the girls' places and encouraged empathy with them. Again, the real problem stemmed from Tituba's influence, and her motives received no understanding from the author or audience.

A few other writers took a harsher view of the afflicted children. For instance, M.V.B. Perley in his 1911 souvenir guide to the witch trials, quoted again in the 1926 tercentennial celebration guide, referred to the afflicted girls as "'children'" in quotes, really they were "pupils" of Tituba and "pioneers of that fateful mischief" under her tutelage.²²⁹ However, even he tended to chalk their actions up to childish antics guided by a pernicious adult influence. Readers could understand their interest in Tituba's tricks by remembering the popularity of spiritualism and thereby identify with the girls' actions and, to a degree, excuse them.²³⁰ In condemning the actions of these girls, writers also typically described some sort of corporal punishment as the necessary corrective for their behavior. When describing Tituba's fate, however, writers seemed satisfied that she remained in slavery and got sold out of the country in order to pay her jail fees, noting for example that she had been "sold to pay her prison fees (she being a slave), after lying in prison thirteen months."²³¹ The ability of white Salemites to dispose of Tituba in this way did not merit sympathy or appear as a tragic end for someone caught up in a social crisis beyond her control, but rather operated as natural given her actions and her identity as "a slave." This distinction in worthy punishments for participation in the witch trials

²²⁹ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*, 19; Gauss, *Salem Tercentenary, July 4th to 10th: Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History*, 19.

²³⁰ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*, 18; Gauss, *Salem Tercentenary, July 4th to 10th: Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History*, 19.

²³¹ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*, 7.

reinforces racialized assumptions about guilt and moral culpability. Despite white girls' far greater participation in the Salem Witch Trials and entering accusations against innocent people, Tituba's actions were underscored as worse and the ultimate source of the white girls' sins.

The wickedness of Tituba operated as a foil for the heroic whiteness of the white men and women who also found themselves accused of witchcraft. Speeches at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse monument, for instance, condemned Tituba for accusing the white Rebecca Nurse, described as being known for her goodness and piety. Indeed, one speaker described Nurse as a "light-house" whose "simple, unaffected goodness" upheld the worth of her "race" amid the chaos instigated by the "Indian Tituba."²³² By repeating this kind of language, early tourism reinscribed a racialized polarity of moral lightness and whiteness versus dark skin, dark morals, and a dark period of history. Visitors to Salem could shake their heads at the horror caused by the "semi-civilized" Tituba and then take comfort in the faith and fortitude of the white women accused of witchcraft alongside her.²³³ This narrative upholds a construction of racialized femininity in which the bodies of white women act as symbolic boundaries around whiteness in need of protection by white men.²³⁴ This idea is a central pillar of white supremacy. Thus early tourism boosters constructed the darkness at work in Salem in 1692 in a large part from the violation of white privilege and white bodies at the hands of a woman of color.

²³² Upham, *Account*, 12-13.

²³³ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*, 6.

²³⁴ See Hall, *Things of Darkness*

Scholarship by Chadwick Hansen, Bernard Rosenthal, and Benjamin Ray have sought to explain the source of twentieth-century confusion over Tituba's race by locating the historical moment in which discourse produced by historians, literature, and newspapers began to inconsistently represent Tituba as Native, Black, and as mixed-race despite her being identified as indigenous in seventeenth-century sources.²³⁵ According to Hansen, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow introduced the idea of Tituba as mixed-race in his 1868 drama *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms*, in which Tituba (having an indigenous mother) learned magic from her African father. Histories written through World War II largely adopted Longfellow's identification, culminating in Marion L. Starkey's influential 1949 *The Devil in Massachusetts*, in which she refers to Tituba as both Black and mixed race, subject to racial stereotypes like southern-inflected speech patterns, a poor work ethic, low-intelligence, and a drive based on pure instinct.²³⁶ As noted by Ray, Tituba's re-identification as Black or mixed-race coincided with a post-Civil War identification of institutional slavery and African descent.²³⁷ By the turn of the twentieth century, travel writers evinced some of this racial confusion as well, although they most often represented Tituba as indigenous. Such a shifting portrayal of her race allowed her to function as an avatar of White racial anxieties, allowing her to function simultaneously as a means of mediating fears about the stability of colonialism and Black servility post-Reconstruction.

²³⁵ See Ray, *Satan and Salem*; Rosenthal, *Salem Story*; Hansen, "The Metamorphosis of Tituba," 3-12.

²³⁶ Hansen, "The Metamorphosis of Tituba," 6-8.

²³⁷ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 201.

Various representations of Tituba as Black and as Native might have also threatened the stability of turn of the century racial categorization, which increasingly depended upon systematized racial typologies. While most travel guides of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries identified Tituba as “Indian,” many others evinced confusion over her identity, producing her as Black or mixed-race. The author of one article in 1891 identified Tituba and her husband as “Indian,” but described her as a practitioner of the “voudou arts,” suggesting an affiliation with cultures descended from African practices.²³⁸ Another guide from 1950 claimed that “The woman, Tituba, was part black and part Carib while the man, John Indian, was pure Barbadosian.”²³⁹ In *Rebecca Nurse* (1930), the author referred to Tituba both as an “Indian woman,” quoted directly from trial transcripts, and as “the black girl” in his own words.²⁴⁰ While early modern usage of the term “black” encompassed those of African descent as well as indigenous persons, the slippage in Tituba’s identification in these twentieth-century works points towards discomfiture and confusion over her race. As scholars such as Shawn Michelle Smith have shown, by the late nineteenth century white middle class Americans increasingly sought to affirm their social privilege through the development of racial codification of populations based on “essential biological difference” and the documentation of traits transmitted through blood.²⁴¹ Obviously, no amount of racial pseudoscience could definitively distinguish individuals’ racial identity or produce stable

²³⁸ “Board of Trade Outing,” *Salem Observer* July 25, 1891, n.p.

²³⁹ Foster, *Guide to the North Shore*, 8.

²⁴⁰ Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse*, 55, 82.

²⁴¹ Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 157-205.

racial hierarchies that would reinforce white supremacy and a purely Anglo-Saxon national character. White supremacists worried about the permeability of constructions of race and the ability of people of color to “pass” or defy efforts to categorize them. African American and Jewish intellectuals actively broke down these artificial racial boundaries by producing written and visual texts that “dismantle[d] the convergence of blood, race, and character so fundamental to...definitions of racial difference.”²⁴² Travel writers’ inability to fit Tituba into a stable racial categorization may have rendered her particularly troubling for white audiences increasingly invested in neat racial categorization as a pillar of their own dominance. Ultimately, the confusion around Tituba’s racial identity suggests that Tituba as an individual did not really matter to White tourists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather, she functions as a figure rather than an embodied, historical subject upon whom writers and visitors could project white supremacist anxieties and use as a scapegoat to ameliorate White guilt in the Salem Witch Trials.

While Tituba’s presence allowed tourists to shift agency and moral culpability for the witchcraft crisis away from White patriarchs, her interpretive role as a conniving, unhappily servile enslaved woman may have agitated White visitors’ anxieties about racial injustice and Black activism at the turn of the century. As shown by Micki McElya, white Americans at the turn of the century trafficked in the stereotype of the “faithful slave” in order to reassure themselves that they “lived in a world in which African Americans are not angry over past and present injustices, a world in which white people

²⁴² Smith, *American Archives*, 188.

were and are not complicit, in which the injustices themselves – of slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing structural racism – seem not to exist at all.”²⁴³ Racist caricatures encouraged White supremacist fantasies such as the mammy figure, who formed close emotional bonds with white families, remained confined in the kitchen, cheerfully looked after white homes and white children, and, most importantly, staunchly defended white paternalism. These imaginings allowed White populations to pretend that people of color required and desired a subservient social position despite highly visible patterns of racial violence and oppression as well as resistance by activists like Ida B. Wells.²⁴⁴

In many ways, Tituba appeared in witchcraft tourism as a perverse Mammy figure, inverting many of the motifs associated with the racist caricature. Tituba’s kitchen became a site of racialized horror rather than a scene of white supremacist domestic comfort. Instead of minding the White children under her care, Tituba frightened them into hysterical fits. They learned horrifying stories of voodoo and diabolic magic at her knee. Instead of caring for the home, she took advantage of the Reverend Parris’ absence to bring superstition and illicit tricks into the family. Rather than living a life of loyalty and service to the white community, she turned against White women and denounced them as fellow witches. Thus, in seeking to mitigate the role of white patriarchy in instigating and furthering the witch trials, White travel writers centered a discontented enslaved woman, treating her as a specter of resentment and agitation on the part of oppressed people of color, further affirming the necessity of White supremacy for White

²⁴³ Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

²⁴⁴ See McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*.

audiences. However, the centrality of an “unfaithful slave” figure necessary for this sort of memory work perhaps threatened the stability of White Americans’ racial mythmaking.

Productions of Tituba as a disruptive indigenous woman, capable of corrupting and exerting power over the white individuals rather than remaining contentedly servile further threatened white supremacy by agitating anxieties about the justice of colonialism. According to Margaret Ellen Newell’s study of indigenous slavery in New England, English colonists were sensitive about the legitimacy of their taking Indian land and sought to base their claims to North America on the willingness of Indians to accept them.²⁴⁵ Depictions of decidedly unwilling enslaved indigenous persons by their Anglo-American descendants could disrupt notions of colonization as “benign” and “righteous,” based on “property transactions” that lead to a “lamentable” but not, in these imaginings, overtly violent removal and extinction.

By exerting influence over the white men and women who enslaved her, Tituba exhibited far greater agency than nineteenth- and early twentieth-century constructions of race and gender typically allowed women of color and illustrated the need for white supremacy to Caucasian tourists. Her husband, John Indian, demonstrated the unfitness of men of color for public life through a lack of agency and masculine virtue. Many early travel guides did not mention John Indian at all, and when they did, they often portrayed him as an appendage of his wife. John Indian’s inability to control his wife, his superstition and lack of reason, and lack of agency in civil society as an enslaved man of

²⁴⁵ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 8-9.

color exhibited an aberrative masculinity. Perley, for instance, refers to “John Indian and his Tituba” as equally ignorant but then imputes all agency in corrupting the afflicted girls to Tituba.²⁴⁶ Anglo-Americans had, since the seventeenth century, naturalized their right to colonial rule through the performance of normative white masculinity and the assertion that their masculine norms were superior to those of other cultures and races; civilization and white masculinity were synonymous.²⁴⁷ Only white men could attain a powerful form of masculinity through the exercise of dominance over others and the ability to protect the women and children of their households.²⁴⁸ John Indian’s inferior performance of masculinity in witchcraft tourist literature naturalized assumptions about racialized manliness and legitimate social authority; portrayals of him illustrated not just the necessity of patriarchy, but of white patriarchy specifically. For white Americans living on Native land, showing indigenous men as unsuited for social influence legitimized colonization and, perhaps, quelled any anxieties about Native removal.

Writers’ various confusion over Tituba’s race and emphasis on her and John Indians’ origins from without New England might also have stemmed from efforts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to present Native Americans as a vanished people, despite hundreds still living and working throughout the region.²⁴⁹ This imagining of the region as a white landscape rather than a “joint production” of Native, Black, and White residents living and working alongside one another entailed a cultural forgetting of

²⁴⁶ Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*, 19.

²⁴⁷ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 90.

²⁴⁸ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25.

²⁴⁹ See O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*.

indigenous enslavement in New England, as traced by Margaret Ellen Newell.²⁵⁰ These efforts seem to have been successful enough for the author of one travel guide from 1903 referred to Tituba as “hindoo,” suggesting that references to an “Indian slave” more readily connoted India than the presence of an indigenous slave trade in Massachusetts.²⁵¹ Scholars such as Newell and Jean M. O’Brien find that such erasures Salem tourism furthered this sort of colonial memory work, incorporating the witch trials into a narrative of triumphalist modernization that relegated indigeneity and the wildness and ignorance it represented to a less-civilized past.

Travel writers and tourists constructed New England as a fundamentally white space, relegating Native presences either to the frontier or to a distant past as part of a vanished wilderness. A *Harper’s Weekly* article from 1871 integrated Native presences into a terrifying historical landscape, rendering them, effectively, fauna among the flora: “They hovered in detached bands around the settlements, their dusky figures gliding stealthily among the shadows about the remote clearings, and showing to the terrified people quick-vanishing faces through the shifting interstices of the foliage.”²⁵² Some travel guides, like the 1916 edition of the *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* marked the beginning of Salem’s history with the arrival of the first colonists at the “pleasant and fruitful neck of a land called Naumkeag” without mentioning the Naumkeag as a people, specifically the original inhabitants of the land.²⁵³ An earlier edition from 1895 mentioned that Naumkeag was “an old Indian name” that had a “suggestion of tomahawk and scalping

²⁵⁰ Newell, *Brethren by Nature*, 7.

²⁵¹ *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903), n.p.

²⁵² “Salem, Massachusetts,” *Harper’s Weekly* August 5, 1871, p. 732.

²⁵³ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1916), 1.

knife [which] gave place to a peaceful Hebrew name soon after” when Salem became the town’s official name in 1629.²⁵⁴ Where the Naumkeag went and how English settlers went about acquiring their land goes largely unremarked upon. Another travel guide from 1926 stated: “We must go back to the early settlement before the forests were cleared and when most of the inhabitants were Indians. Think of the horrors that were committed by them previous to the witch outbreak.”²⁵⁵ According to the *Harper’s Weekly* article, it was “no wonder the troubled people thought Indians the very emissaries and pow-wows of the devil; for if that personage ever had its servitors in this world these same subtle, malignant and copper-skinned savages were they.”²⁵⁶ Critically, Native Americans appear in these narratives not as part of New England’s landscape but as part of a prior wilderness to be “cleared” for the arrival of civilization. They do not appear even as full human beings with cultures, politics, and economic systems; instead, Native Americans appear as part of nature like the “forests” and wild animals before the imposition of settler colonialism. This legitimizes American colonialism by denying indigenous nations full humanity and positioning them as antithetical to modernity and a hindrance to its advancement by their very presence. Visitors seem to have absorbed this notion of Native Americans as vanished historical actors. Blackwelder wrote in her diary in 1938 that “I have been living in the seventeenth and eighteenth century mid pilgrims and witches and Indians,” suggesting that in her imagination, Native men and women appeared as ancient and as spooky as categories of persons that had ceased to exist hundreds of years before –

²⁵⁴ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1895), 4.

²⁵⁵ George Arvedson, *Salem with a Guide* (Salem, 1926), 25.

²⁵⁶ “Salem, Massachusetts,” *Harper’s Weekly* August 5, 1871, p. 732.

they were a “real thrill.”²⁵⁷ By being so much a part of an earlier, vanished landscape, writers denied Native continuance and alienated them from Massachusetts ground.

By the time travel writers got to a distinctly colonial, proto-American society in 1692, Native Americans appear as entirely peripheral to New England society. As shown above, travel guides continually emphasize Tituba and John Indian’s status as indigenous to the Caribbean not New England. They operate as racial threats to Salem’s stability as intruders to a white space; as part of the restoration of order at the end of the witch trials they are removed from the region entirely through sale. Further, Tituba and John Indian appear as the only slaves in Salem in 1692, brought into New England by the troublesome Samuel Parris and then removed at the conclusion of the witch trials. In fact, two other enslaved women, Mary Black and Candy, found themselves accused of witchcraft before ultimately being acquitted.²⁵⁸ This marks a continuance of “disowning slavery,” as described by Joanne Melish, in which white New Englanders sought to efface Black populations from the region through various methods including “representing people of color as ridiculous or dangerous 'strangers' in anecdotes, cartoons, and broadsides... emphasizing slavery and 'race' as 'southern problems'...[and] characterizing New England slavery as brief and mild, or even denying its having existed.”²⁵⁹ White supremacists hoped that “by erasing the presence of free blacks, white people could efface the presence of slavery in New England” and create “a triumphant narrative of a historically free, white New England in which a few people of color were

²⁵⁷ Maud Del Mar Blackwelder. *Maud Del Mar Blackwelder Travel Diaries, 1938-1957*. Diary. Ms. N-1847. Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁵⁸ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 202.

²⁵⁹ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 2.

unaccountably marooned, a class of permanently 'debased' strangers."²⁶⁰ By showing people of color and slavery as a temporary import to New England in witchcraft interpretation, writers could scapegoat people of color and alienate them from the region's past and identity at the same time. By emphasizing that Tituba and John Indian present a racialized threat from without New England, writers portrayed New England as an inherently white space and rightfully so, given the chaos instigated by Tituba and her culture.

Scant touristic material portrayed Tituba in a sympathetic light, and when they did, they completely disempowered her. For instance, the 1903 edition of *What to See in Salem* blamed the "brown-skinned" Tituba for whipping the afflicted girls into a frenzy with her stories and magic tricks, but also noted that she expressed "sorrow" for tormenting the girls in court. In a further subscript the author noted that "There are some who believe Minister Parris to have been the arch-demon of the whole affair; say he beat his servant Tituba, till he wrung a false confession from her, and then took upon himself the office of public prosecutor, questioning witnesses in such a way as to elicit answers that would enable him to vent his fanatical hatred and malice towards persons who had incurred his displeasure."²⁶¹ This guide continues to blame Tituba for raising initial suspicions of witchcraft and importing superstitious rites, again belying the fact that the tricks recorded in the Parris household originated in an Anglo-American tradition. She remained the "spark" of initial accusations of witchcraft but does not appear as a

²⁶⁰ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 3.

²⁶¹ *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903), n.p.

malicious agent of chaos who condemned innocent white women to death. At the same time, however, the author denies Tituba any agency in her response to charges of bewitchment against her or in shaping her legal testimony. Unpacking Tituba's motives for providing the testimony she gave in court might entail indicting the systems of race, gender, and colonialism that informed them and by extension indict their continuance under Jim Crow. Instead, only the white, male Parris exhibits real power over a completely passive and victimized Tituba, using her as a tool in the furtherance of his personal vendettas against his neighbors.²⁶² This points towards an interpretive pattern in which Tituba, in order to be rendered sympathetic for white audiences, is disempowered.

Ultimately the racial anxieties exhibited in witchcraft tourism center around the destabilization of white supremacy, not the harm or instability caused by its imposition and continuance. Through the figuration of Tituba, travel writers showed racism and white power as necessary for the orderly functioning of society. Indeed, New England slavery does not seem to have existed beyond the foreign, aberrative presences of Tituba and John Indian. Even in their case, slavery and racism appear as weak, not particularly oppressive, or in any way systemic. For instance, Charles Tapley, a Nurse descendent influential in the interpretation of the Nurse Homestead, wrote in a biography of his ancestor that Tituba "escaped shrewdly by becoming an accuser of...a bedridden woman, half-distracted by family troubles, who had seen better days, the vagrant Sarah Good, a social outcast, who wandered about without any settled habitation, and two others."²⁶³ At

²⁶² Portraying Parris as a singular villain in this way also raises the suggestion that the 1692 witch trials resulted from the actions of a few individuals rather than larger issues of economics, social tensions, gender constructions, and religion in New England society itself.

²⁶³ Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse*, 34.

the same time, Tituba's vulnerability to abuse and charges of witchcraft because of her status as an enslaved woman of color go largely unacknowledged. Even in the case of the 1903 *What to See in Salem* cited above, the reference to Tituba's beating does not connect to larger systemic issues or commentary; rather they are a means of illustrating Parris' personal vendettas against his neighbors.²⁶⁴ By failing to acknowledge Tituba's vulnerability and imputing so much villainy and power over the outbreak of the witch trials to her, tourists and travel writers denied the actual power dynamics of a white supremacist society and the dynamics of slavery itself. The narrative emphasis on her corrupting presence in the home and in New England society affirms anxieties that those placed in servile positions might not remain so without the vigilance of white people. By emphasizing how white women like Sarah Good or Sarah Osborne could be victimized by the malicious whims of a woman of color, who refused to remain in a servile position, tourist guides suggested that white people were really the vulnerable ones in a racist society, subject to aggression and spite by people of color. In this way, witchcraft tourism through the 1950s upheld notions of racist hierarchies as just and deeply necessary but simultaneously affirmed fears that this system could be easily overthrown or thrown into disarray. In order to ensure its continuance, white bourgeois tourists needed to behave in accordance with their racialized gender identities and maintain reason and control in their homes and wider society.

²⁶⁴ *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903), n.p.

White Women

An interpretive emphasis on preserving the honor of Massachusetts manhood marginalizes the accused women and elides their individuality. When women do appear, travel writers code their accusations and victimization in ways that affirm white patriarchy and condemn transgressive femininity. This is most notable in the contrast between the treatment of Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne with portrayals of Rebecca Nurse. The former were poor with bad fame for unpleasantness and sexual transgressions, the first to be accused of witchcraft alongside Tituba, and often framed as the usual suspects in witchcraft cases as a result of their disreputable reputations.²⁶⁵ *Witchcraft Illustrated* in 1892, for instance, described Sarah Osborne as “an unfortunate who had been talked about for other sins” at the time of her accusation.²⁶⁶ Guides also tend to emphasize the social isolation of Good and Osborne, referring to them in terms such as “a melancholy distracted person,” “a poor friendless creature,” or “a married woman who lived apart from her husband, and by begging obtained a precarious support for herself and her children. No one cared for her and few manifested any pity for her poverty.”²⁶⁷ Modern scholarship on witchcraft certainly upholds the idea that Good and Osborne typify women who would normally attract suspicions of witchcraft as economically marginalized women who accrued reputations for querulousness over time.²⁶⁸ However, by emphasizing their social isolation and often referring to their disorderly reputations,

²⁶⁵ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 16.

²⁶⁶ Kimball, *Witchcraft Illustrated*, 7.

²⁶⁷ Gillespie, *Illustrated History of Salem and Environs: Art Souvenir Edition of the Salem Evening News*, 7; Kimball, *Witchcraft Illustrated*, 7; *Visitor's Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1916), 13.

²⁶⁸ See Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 57-94.

writers uphold conservative constructions of femininity. Transgressive women accrued social opprobrium and isolation and lack the social capital to protect themselves from violence, poverty, and other dangers. Thus, behaving according to normative feminine standards is shown as necessary for maintaining a decent reputation, which in turn create social bonds for women that insulate them from social ills. Travel writers and tourists certainly did not see the charges against women like Good and Osborne as defensible, but the suspicions against them do appear as somewhat more expected in consequence of their unruly behavior.

Near hagiographical descriptions of Rebecca Nurse – indeed, one of her descendants titled his 1930 biography of her *Rebecca Nurse: Saint but Witch Victim* – clearly delineate the qualities of idealized white femininity as “delicate, spiritual, dedicated to the home.”²⁶⁹ In this biography, “to her children she was the devoted mother, to her husband an unending comfort, to her friends an inspiration and joy. Her name, over which will always play the breath of romance, will never be forgotten. She died a Christian martyr, slain by the forces of ignorance, superstition, malice, and all uncharitableness. She lives in the memory of everyone who knows her pitiful yet glorious story.”²⁷⁰ She possessed “unaltering faith,” “patience and unostentatious courage” and simple unaffected goodness.”²⁷¹ Indeed, the inscription on the Rebecca Nurse memorial is dedicated to a “Christian martyr” and dedicated “in memory of her Christian character.”²⁷² Katharine Abbott also described Nurse in selfless terms: “Rebecca Nurse

²⁶⁹ See Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse*.

²⁷⁰ Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse*, 103.

²⁷¹ Upham, *Account*, 13, 14.

²⁷² Upham, *Account*, 28. Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

(or Nourse) was of an old Huguenot family and a woman of intellect; possessing a wide sympathy and an understanding of medicine, she devoted herself to the sick.”²⁷³ In these interpretations of her life, Nurse exhibited charity, piety, and family-mindedness; essentially, Nurse lived a life defined by service to others, selflessness, and assiduous care to the men around her. By valorizing women like Rebecca Nurse, who represented pious, domesticated femininity and presenting more unruly women as somewhat inevitable victims, the guides reify normative standards of behavior that align with patriarchal values.

The connection between behavior, reputation, and societal protection is reinforced in descriptions of more traditionally “good” women such as Rebecca Nurse.

Interpretation around the Nurse Memorial and Homestead as well as some travel guides relate how, in light of her excellent reputation, neighbors leapt to her defense and entered a petition for her release from prison. For instance, Tapley described how Rebecca Nurse remained “calm” and “silent” during her trial, had earned praise for raising a family of children well, and inspired her neighbors to come to her defense with a petition. By contrast, Sarah Good, who “was not the same type as Rebecca Nurse” and threatened her executioner that “God will give you blood to drink,” did not earn the same acclaim.²⁷⁴

Although her “Christian virtue” did not quite save Nurse’s life, it nearly did, and it certainly inspired those around her to try to save her life. The fact that her reputation failed to save her from the gallows demonstrated the degree to which the Salem Witch

²⁷³ Katharine Abbott, *Old Paths and Legends of New England: Saunterings Over Historic Roads, with Glimpses of Picturesque Fields and Old Homesteads in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire* (New York: G. Putnam and Sons, 1903), 166.

²⁷⁴ Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse*, 59-66.

Trials were shocking and tragic. This understanding is echoed by Maud del Mar Blackwelder, visiting Salem in the 1930s, who found it particularly galling that respectable women came under suspicion of witchcraft. She wrote that ““It was in Beverly that the Salem witchcraft was brought to an end. The Minister's wife Mrs. Hale was accused of witchcraft. The whole community of Beverly declared belief in her innocence because of her beauty of character which had inspired...in the hearts of the community a confidence that superstition could not shake.”²⁷⁵ Again, Mrs. Hale lived an exemplary life of Christian virtue, earned the respect of her neighbors, and as a result they protected her against slander and got the charges against her dropped. Critically, the idea that disreputable women might be more likely to be victimized is not in itself interrogated or challenged but rather normalized. While witchcraft charges were inherently unjust and all of the crisis’ victims were pitied, the charges against women like Nurse and Hale were especially tragic and especially outrageous.

Commentators described Nurse’s goodness as a “light-house” inspiring others, particularly men like her sons, to action on her behalf. In many ways her narrative function is to provide an opportunity for those around her to exemplify their goodness as much as it is to illustrate her own particular traits or agency.²⁷⁶ The 1902 edition of the *Visitor’s Guide to Salem*, for example, did not actually commemorate Rebecca Nurse herself, but rather praised the heroism of “a few simple towns-folk, like the neighbors of Rebecca Nurse, [who] braved public hostility, at large risk of character and standing.”²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Diary, Maud del Mar Blackwelder Papers, Ms. N-1847, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁷⁶ Upham, *Account*, 13.

²⁷⁷ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1902), 4.

The monument association eventually dedicated a memorial in 1892 to those who defended her with the petition for her release. It reads:

In observance of the two hundredth anniversary of her martyrdom we dedicate it, on this twenty-ninth day of July, 1892, to the memory of those who bore witness in her behalf at the time of her great peril and need; to the love of justice and right; to the spirit of truth and moral courage; and to the law of Christian love and kindness.

This construction of Rebecca Nurse reinforces the Victorian and early twentieth-century ideal of a bourgeois middle-class white woman who instills upright Christian virtue in her family and community through her genteel example.²⁷⁸ Indeed, Nurse would continue to do so from beyond the grave by using her characterization to inculcate white bourgeois values to tourists visiting her memorial and homestead. Speeches at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse memorial explicitly understood their mission as one of moral uplift for future generations through the veneration of her saintly character:

Rebecca Nurse was a woman of rare Christian virtues, respected and beloved by all who knew her. Who of her descendants is not proud of the record; and is it not a moral benefit to perpetuate the memory of all such worthy people? The greatness of the future will be in great measure determined by what men and women do to-day, as our present attainment is the result of what faithful ones have fought for and won in all the ages. Thus we are acting for posterity.²⁷⁹

Nurse's characterization as a housewifely saint validated nineteenth- and early twentieth-century constructions of white women as the moral center of the home and gave them roots in the colonial era, the genesis of white New England society. The goodness of community becomes invested in the bodies of white women – again positioning them as

²⁷⁸ See S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States 1830-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

²⁷⁹ Upham, *Account*, 34.

boundaries for defending the values associated with white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. By defending Nurse or Hale for living godly lives according to feminine norms, Salemites sought to protect these values and normative bourgeois social rules by extension.

Overall, women seem to have served almost as props upon which men acted. For instance, many travel guides did not refer to particular victims of the witch trials at all, or reduced them to a list of names.²⁸⁰ In one case, the antiquarian M.V.B. Perley wrote *Salem Village Witchcraft: Mrs. Elizabeth Howe's Trial* in 1911, which describes the history of belief in witchcraft and Puritan beliefs particularly in the seventeenth century, the overall course of the Salem Witch Trials, the stereotypical witch, and the genealogy of a Mr. James Howe. Nothing about Elizabeth Howe herself appears in the book aside from transcripts of her trial document, which primarily serve to illustrate the course of a witch trial in 1692 and correct popular misassumptions made by tourists.²⁸¹ Thus, witchcraft trials appear as a function of male action, and male historians, authors, and other commentators subsequently defined the women involved and made meaning of their lives and deaths.

Overall, the characterizations of the women involved hinge on vulnerability and passivity. One speaker at the dedication of the Rebecca Nurse memorial praised her specifically for bringing “no angry accusation” against those who condemned her.²⁸² She did not resist her accusation and arrest, but rather accepted her fate as the “will of the

²⁸⁰ See for instance, Hill and Nevins, *An Illustrated Guide to the North Shore of Massachusetts*, 15.

²⁸¹ For instance, Perley, *A Short History of the Salem Village Witchcraft*.

²⁸² Upham, *Account*, 14.

Lord.”²⁸³ When writers afforded Sarah Osborne some individuality, they often emphasized that she was “bedridden” when accused and brought to court.²⁸⁴ Notably, the more sympathetic portrayals of Tituba also placed her in a passive position as the victim of a beating by Parris.²⁸⁵ Giles Corey, by contrast, became a martyr through bold defiance of the court and torture. Tourist literature thus genders exemplary moral character and heroism; heroines met their deaths with stoicism and a quiet acceptance while men like Corey went to their deaths with daring and challenges to their accusers.

Assumptions about female passivity and vulnerability also anchored narratives about the initial afflicted girls whose bewitchments catalyzed the Salem Witch Trials where the innocence of white girlhood was reaffirmed at the expense of Tituba. By the nineteenth century, Americans had “woven childhood and innocence together wholly,” and raced it white.²⁸⁶ As Robin Bernstein has shown, sentimental representations of girls operated as “a hub in a busy cultural system linking innocence to whiteness through the body of a child.”²⁸⁷ In order to reconcile the afflicted children’s role in the witchcraft crisis with notions of white innocence, travel writers located its origins in the corrupting influence of a woman of color on the white girls’ minds and bodies. As noted above, most guides blame Tituba for bringing frightening tricks and stories into the Parris home and scaring them into believing themselves tormented by witches. Further, writers typically asserted that they should not be held entirely culpable for instigating the witch

²⁸³ Upham, *Account*, 12.

²⁸⁴ For instance, Kimball, *Witchcraft Illustrated*, 7.

²⁸⁵ *What to See in Salem* (Salem: Salem Press Co., 1903), n.p.

²⁸⁶ Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 4.

²⁸⁷ Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 6.

trials since they could not have known the consequences of entering accusations of witchcraft. A newspaper article noted, for instance, that “it is not the opinion that at first they any intention of accusing anybody or going to the lengths they afterwards did.”²⁸⁸ Because of their ages – Betty Parris was nine, Abigail Williams eleven – they were particularly susceptible to the interest of the adults around them and pressured into going along with fears of witchcraft.²⁸⁹ The girls did not know the consequences of their actions and should have been checked by the adults around them. Notably, the white girls who first accused women of witchcraft are presumed to be innocent of real wrong-doing and mal intent in contrast to Tituba, whose guilt for all of 1692 is taken as a given because she confessed to witchcraft and pointed the finger at others after being accused herself. This, in conjunction with accusations that Tituba corrupted the white girls under her care, emphasized anxieties that whiteness be seen as fundamentally good and innocent. In order for white innocence to be presumed and ultimately upheld as true, guilt, sin, and malign action are shifted to people of color. As well, writers singled out women and girls as courtroom actors. While women under twenty-five were the most numerous among the afflicted in the Salem Witch Trials, their numbers were anomalous in Anglo-American witchcraft where the bewitched tended to be disproportionately male.²⁹⁰ Such a narrow focus on the girls’ actions in court elided the presence of adult men who testified as victims of witchcraft, served as witnesses to others’ afflictions, and found witchcraft

²⁸⁸ “Board of Trade Outing,” *Salem Observer* July 25, 1891, n.p.

²⁸⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 14.

²⁹⁰ Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 156-157.

suspicions credible enough to enter formal legal complaints.²⁹¹ Again, this points to an anxiety about gender performance; being bewitched places men in the role of victim and subject to the “silliness of these hysterical adolescents.”²⁹² To uphold white patriarchy, a lack of control over one’s mental and physical faculties gets shifted from white men to white women, and the guilt and moral culpability for these failures becomes particularly embodied in women of color.

When travel guides did depict women with real agency, they generally did so as accusers, with their actions framed far differently than the men involved in the witch trials as judges and ministers. These women are often imputed to have much more petty, malicious motivations for their belief in witchcraft and participation in the trials. An article in 1891, for instance, described the girls involved as “precocious,” “mischievous,” taking “wicked delight in practicing upon the credulity of the village” and “chuckling” over the effects of their “pranks.”²⁹³ An adult woman suffering from malefic afflictions was “a gossip and malicious busybody.”²⁹⁴ In this way, men’s and women’s actions and interference in public life are framed as being qualitatively different, with men emerging as the rightful political and legal actors. The men’s belief in witchcraft and participation in the witch trials is presented in much more sympathetic and rational terms. They

²⁹¹ See John Demos, “Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth-Century New England,” *The American Historical Review* 75 (1970), 1311-1326. Demos also find men to be overrepresented among those identified as victims of bewitchment in seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beyond Salem. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 154. Benjamin Ray also states that men typically acted as accusers during this period; the numbers of women present in Salem’s courts were unusual. Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 8.

²⁹² Frank A. Manny, Speech, “Rebecca Nurse as Pioneer,” *Rebecca Nurse Association*, Danvers Archival Center.

²⁹³ “Board of Trade Outing,” *Salem Observer* July 25, 1891, n.p.

²⁹⁴ “Board of Trade Outing,” *Salem Observer* July 25, 1891, n.p.

believed in bewitchment on the basis of religion and the opinions of other learned men. They were misguided, but not malicious, interfering, or silly for their beliefs.²⁹⁵ In this way, witchcraft tourism affirms conservative notions of gender in which women play a critical role in inspiring men to act on their behalf as a moral example. Women's small-mindedness and the petty nature of their interests made them unsuited for exerting direct authority, and again white patriarchy is reified as necessary for societal functioning. In a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century context in which many men found their masculinity and American society threatened by women's greater participation in the workforce and public life, greater legal and economic independence, and a growing feminist movement and the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Salem tourism afforded tourists an opportunity to negotiate anxieties about women's suitability for public life and affirm a domesticated form of femininity in which good women lived in service to God and their families.²⁹⁶

Conclusion

In 1931, Charles Tapley, a Rebecca Nurse descendant who guided the preservation and interpretation of her homestead, wrote that he lived in an age of "social transformation... Surely a new culture is growing up about us in New England, not competitive with the old but an extension of it, broader in scope [and] bolder in spirit."²⁹⁷ In order to equip modern New Englanders for this age of change, he felt it incumbent

²⁹⁵ "Board of Trade Outing," *Salem Observer* July 25, 1891, n.p.

²⁹⁶ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 16. Kimmel, 96.

²⁹⁷ Letter, Charles Tapley to William Appleton, January 10, 1931, Historic New England.

upon “the generation of men and women now in New England...to capitalize the opportunity offered to carry on the good work of preserving New England antiquities.”²⁹⁸ Creating a vision of Salem’s colonial past “applicable to the needs of our common life” that would ensure that bourgeois White Anglo-Saxon Protestant values would continue to dominate American living in the twentieth century.²⁹⁹

In this letter, Tapley seemed confident in the ability of White middle-class Americans to retain their positions of privilege amidst the social transformations of the turn of the century. Overall, however, tourist narratives of the Salem Witch Trials reflect anxieties about the potential upheaval in normative relationships of raced, classed, and gendered power as women and people of color agitated for their rights. In witchcraft interpretation, the trials horror stemmed in a large part from reversals in social hierarchies, allowing tourist discourse to operate as a means of negotiating these fears about the stability of white patriarchy in the face of these challenges. Narratives centering the ability of a woman of color to disrupt the white society around her or the failure of class and reputation to preserve the lives of genteel white individuals warned visitors about the consequences of any breakdown in traditional power relations. Travel writers upheld the legitimacy of white patriarchy as essential for social functioning – despite the manifest failures of the law, society, and government in 1692 – by upholding a few figures as exemplars of masculine and feminine virtue and devoting much of their narrative to rehabilitating the reputations of traditional figures of white patriarchal

²⁹⁸ Letter, Charles Tapley to William Appleton, January 10, 1931, Historic New England.

²⁹⁹ Letter, Charles Tapley to William Appleton, January 10, 1931, Historic New England.

authority involved in the trials. Touristic discourse integrated Salem's history into a larger narrative of progress by producing it as a moment in which White New Englanders ushered in a modern, enlightened world by rejecting the superstitions to which they had briefly succumbed. In this way, Salem's patriarchs were instrumental to the creation of the rational, virtuous citizenry necessary for American democracy; they appeared responsible for social order rather than its breakdown and abuses. Ultimately, Salem witch tourism allowed visitors to condemn the witchcraft "delusion" in a way that reassured them that they lived in a rational, civilized age. As long as they held on to their positions of social, economic, and political power, they could be confident in the continuation of American progress and the legitimacy of their own privilege.

Chapter Two

Heroes and Hysterical Girls: Evolving Witchcraft Tourism c. 1950-2000

Introduction

With the publication of *The Crucible* in 1953, playwright Arthur Miller defined understandings of the Salem Witch Trials in popular culture, establishing 1692 as a moral lesson for the nation about the importance of individual action against repression. These lessons about individualism and rejecting complicity with unjust action began to shape touristic representations of the Witch Trials, particularly after the 1970s when the television show *Bewitched* (1964-1972) filmed a series of eight episodes on location in Salem and generated a wave of tourist interest in the city. By the mid-1970s, the tourist industry, which until that point had relied mostly upon surviving colonial structures, sites associated with the trials, and particular artifacts like the court documents, had grown to include for-profit, purpose-built attractions capitalizing on renewed interest in witchcraft. New commercial tourist attractions took up Miller's message as a moral justification in Salem tourism, connecting it to a trajectory of scapegoating the "other" – particularly in the case of the Red Scare and Civil Rights movements – in times of crisis. Institutions like the Salem Witch Museum, the first of these major new attractions, would be a "voice" for the "innocent" teaching tourists about the injustice of 1692 so they could return to their everyday lives and ensure that "intolerance" and scapegoating would be combatted in the future.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

Tourist boosters of the 1970s developed these narratives of individual resistance to an unjust government and social crisis amidst a period of conservative backlash against the gains made by the Civil Rights Movement and women's liberation activists. As a result, many of the witchcraft narratives of the latter part of the twentieth century negotiated the uncertainties of gendered, classed, and racialized power relations post-civil rights. Most tourist attractions located the values of individualism, rational and just thinking, and moral heroism in traditional white male figures like John Proctor or Giles Corey rather than any of the women who similarly challenged the Salem Witch Trials. Instead, the accused women appeared in passive roles, inspiring the protection of the white men around them through their own virtue. Tituba, generally depicted as a Black voodoo practitioner who incited the witch trials through her sorcery and frightening tales, and the afflicted girls, often framed as teenagers or adolescents instead of children, embodied the chaos, malice, legal injustice, and social oppression of 1692. In this figuration, the accused, particularly the accused women, symbolized scapegoating and the violated values of justice under the law while white men embodied American values of reason, individualism, order, and the active defense of community values. People of color and young women represented disorder and injustice in need of checking by the white men who embodied American values and stability.

In these narratives, patriarchy did not create social and psychological pressures that contributed to the witchcraft crisis or allowed elite men to dominate the legal proceedings or their neighbors, women and girls took on the fault of the trials for lashing out due to the boredom and lack of attention engendered by colonial gender roles. Indeed,

misogyny, sexism, colonialism, or patriarchy were not engaged with in depth enough to seriously challenge them – or the scapegoating, injustice, and group violence engendered by these systems ostensibly condemned by the overarching narrative of Salem tourism. The overarching condemnations of scapegoating, sexism, and racism suggests that white visitors did not want to be seen as oppressive themselves and would feel discomfort or anger at being identified with racism or misogyny. Thus, the historical framing of racism and misogyny made it seem like those were historically specific phenomena left behind by 1970s Americans.

By the 1990s, witchcraft tourism established a pattern of using generalized language around “intolerance” and “scapegoating” with limited attention to identity politics of race and gender in 1692 and afterwards to paper over actual dynamics of white supremacy. The dedication of the 1992 Salem Witch Memorial reinforced this messaging. Although the memorial represented the necessity for tolerance and the tercentenary commemoration included a number of events about contemporary issues of social justice, other programs continued to capitalize on sinister associations with Tituba to sell their events and neglected to address misogyny past and present. Again, tourism used the language of tolerance and scapegoating to paper over real identity-based violence and maintain white supremacy, essentially appropriating the language of civil rights and victimization to center white people in interpreting the legacy of 1692.

The Crucible, *Bewitched*, and the Witch City

In 1953, Arthur Miller published *The Crucible*, which reimagined the Salem Witch Trials as an analogy for Cold War politics. It opens with a group of girls reveling in the forest, led by Tituba, whom he depicted as Black. When their antics are discovered, Betty Parris falls into fits, raising suspicions of witchcraft. The audience sees prominent men of the town – Giles Corey, John Proctor, Samuel Parris, and Thomas Putnam – argue over property while Abigail Williams is questioned. Miller depicts Williams, who was eleven in 1692, as a teenager who had conducted an affair with the married John Proctor while employed in his home as a servant.³⁰¹ When his wife Elizabeth discovered their liaison, she fired Abigail. Tituba confesses to witchcraft and Abigail joins in making accusations against others in Salem, initiating a witch-frenzy. She and the other afflicted girls, including the Proctors' servant Mary Warren, appear as the villains of the play, condemning innocent people out of jealousy, a desire for power, and pettiness. The Proctors, by contrast, become the voices of reason. Elizabeth argues with her husband, urging him to denounce the afflicted girls publicly. John resists until Elizabeth is arrested on witchcraft charges. Proctor brings Mary Warren before the court to expose the other girls as frauds. He confesses to the affair with Williams and decries the entire witch hunt as a sham leading to his own accusation. He and Elizabeth initially admit to witchcraft, but when brought before the court and urged to name others as witches, Proctor retracts his confession and refuses to implicate anyone. In the end, Proctor is executed. His

³⁰¹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 14.

willingness to die for his integrity redeems him for his initial silence when the witch trials began.³⁰²

Since its publication, Miller's play has defined Americans' understanding of the Salem Witch Trials, informed interest in tourism, and influenced how some of the first purpose-built attractions in Salem crafted their interpretations. At the unveiling of the Salem Witch Memorial in 1991, Miller explained that for him, the Salem Witch Trials demonstrated the necessity of individual heroism and adherence to principles in the face of injustice and oppression.³⁰³ As shown in Chapter One, Salem Witch Trial tourism reflected the tensions of its day, and by the 1950s some travel writers seem to have begun using 1692 as a staging ground for American values in the face of Cold War anxieties. One 1950 travel guide blamed the "conformity" and "suppression" of politics, religion, and economics for making colonists turn to witchcraft for "self-expression" and escape from "confined thoughts and actions."³⁰⁴ The shock of the Salem Witch Trials enabled early Americans to overthrow this conformist thinking and enter a modern age predicated more upon individual liberties and freedom of thought.³⁰⁵ Similarly, Miller's play, though a fictional commentary on the Red Scare, quickly defined understandings of the witch trials themselves, both in terms of its moral lessons and the historical characterizations of

³⁰² Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1953).

³⁰³ Arthur Miller, "Why I Wrote the Crucible," *The New Yorker* October 21 and 28, 1996, 158-164. "Miller visits Salem for design unveiling," *Boston Sunday Globe* November 24, 1991, p. North 11; Kathy McCabe, "Playwright helps honor victims of witch hunt," *Boston Sunday Globe* November 21, 1991, n.p.

³⁰⁴ Foster, *Guide to the North Shore*, 7.

³⁰⁵ Foster, *Guide to the North Shore*, 7; Robert Jervis. *How Statesmen Think: The Psychology of International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 169-188.

the people involved, and increased touristic interest in Salem.³⁰⁶ As early as 1953, the caretakers of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, who also gave tours of the property for visitors, reported that “We believe that at least twelve were influenced in visiting the house from having seen the play ‘The Crucible,’ one of them signed the register as a descendant of John Proctor.”³⁰⁷ Miller’s play continued to shape tourists’ understandings of the Salem Witch Trials, and their expectations of historic interpretation, through the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty first.³⁰⁸

John and Elizabeth Proctor rented a farm and operated a tavern at the time of the witch trials and did indeed publicly condemn the proceedings. When his own servant, Mary Warren, began to suffer fits of bewitchment, he threatened her with a beating, at which point her afflictions ceased.³⁰⁹ The Proctors were later convicted of witchcraft by the Court of Oyer and Terminer, primarily on the basis of Warren’s testimony against them.³¹⁰ This court has been created by an emergency order on the part of Massachusetts’ governor William Phips largely to process the witchcraft cases, which had risen quickly to the point of crisis. At the time, a new charter for the colony nullified Massachusetts’ legal system, requiring the legislature to remake it entirely in strict accordance with English law. This could not be achieved quickly enough to deal with the witchcraft panic,

³⁰⁶ Hill, “Salem as Witch City,” 285; DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*, “A Dramatic Tale: Salem on Stage and Screen,” Kindle Edition; Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018; Informational Interview, National Park Service, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

³⁰⁷ Letter George Gordon to Mr. Bertram Little, Director, The Society for the Preservation of New England Activities, 1953. Historic New England.

³⁰⁸ Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018; Informational Interview, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

³⁰⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 21.

³¹⁰ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 33-34.

hence Phips' creation of a special court.³¹¹ It was this body that ordered the executions of the Proctors, although Elizabeth's pregnancy really did spare her until the witch trials had concluded.³¹²

The Crucible not only informed broader understandings of the moral lesson of the Salem Witch Trials, but it created a slippage between the characters of the play and actual historic personages.³¹³ As shown by Robin DeRosa, not only did Miller's play become the most well-known interpretation of the Salem Witch Trials, but throughout the text of the play Miller fosters the idea that "only fiction has the ability to reveal the true essence of history."³¹⁴ Although witchcraft tourism did not go so far as to conflate the most purely fictional elements of Miller's play, like Proctor's affair with Abigail Williams, interest in the play did seem to inform how attractions staged their interpretation. For instance, John Proctor, nearly completely absent from the prior century of witchcraft tourism, would become one of the central figures of the Salem Witch Museum's interpretation.³¹⁵ Miller characterized Proctor as a man "paralyzed" by his sins, much as liberals of the 1950s mired themselves in "paralysis...fearful, and with good reason, of being identified as covert Communists if they should protest too strongly."³¹⁶ By overcoming this personal paralysis to become "the most forthright voice against the

³¹¹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 24.

³¹² Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 34-36.

³¹³ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 34-36.

³¹⁴ DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*, "A Dramatic Tale: Salem on Stage and Screen," Kindle Edition.

³¹⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³¹⁶ Arthur Miller, "Why I Wrote the Crucible," *The New Yorker* October 21 and 28, 1996, 159, 162.

madness around him,” Proctor embodied an idealized American masculinity for the Cold War: brave, strong, principled, individualistic, and unafraid to defend others.³¹⁷

Other, far less positive characterizations from Miller’s play also crept into Salem’s interpretation. While Proctor took on civic virtues, vices shifted to his characterizations of the afflicted children, aged-up as teenagers in Miller’s play. As noted by DeRosa, “the devil [in Salem] is actually Abigail Williams, who torments Elizabeth and others because she has been displaced as Proctor’s lover.”³¹⁸ The play also includes scenes of teenage girls cavorting naked in the woods in diabolic rites, invented completely by Miller. Despite these scenes being wholly a figment of Miller’s imagination, the Witch History Museum opens its guided tour with a scene of (clothed) teenage girls frolicking with Satan in the forest.³¹⁹ Williams and the other children, in both Miller and tourism, are “manipulate[d] seemingly without regard for her autonomy, dignity, or real lived experience.”³²⁰ The afflicted girls take on the sins of their community, represented in this interpretation as the cause of disorder and the real agents of the Witch Trials, the embodiment of social chaos, petty malice, and illegitimate power. Tituba, meanwhile, appears in *The Crucible* as a Black woman who preys upon the fears and teenage emotions of the young white women around her, stirring them up into what will become the witchcraft hysteria.³²¹ This understanding aligned with existing scapegoating of Tituba in tourism literature and histories of 1692. Although the Witch

³¹⁷ Miller, “Why I Wrote the Crucible,” 162.

³¹⁸ DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*, “A Dramatic Tale: Salem on Stage and Screen,” Kindle Edition.

³¹⁹ Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

³²⁰ DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*, “A Dramatic Tale: Salem on Stage and Screen,” Kindle Edition.

³²¹ Miller, *The Crucible*.

Museum undermined notions of Tituba as deliberately, malevolently frightening the girls into their fits, other attractions like the Witch History Museum and travel guides did not. Tituba remained, intentionally or not, the spark of the witch trials in tourism and broader popular culture.

In 1970, the TV show *Bewitched* (1964-1972) aired a series of episodes about Samantha's troubles over a witch convention in Salem. Upon their arrival in the city, Samantha and her mother Endora are appalled to see the city's witchcraft attractions denoted by signage emblazoned with a hag. Decrying such images as "disgraceful," Endora magically transforms this hag into a cute, young, blonde witch as Samantha asks her husband Darrin if he would want to be pictured as an "ugly old crow."³²² As they drive further into town and pause before the Witch House, Samantha explains to Darrin that she does not want to go inside on principle, informing him that there were never any witches in Salem.³²³ Endora elaborates that the trials were merely "moral prejudice and hysteria."³²⁴ Later, Samantha travels back in time to 1692 and inevitably gets taken before the court on charges of witchcraft. She reveals herself to be a witch, illustrating to those convened that they had been arresting and executing innocent people. She forces those assembled to confront their role in perpetrating a tragedy, telling them that they had persecuted the "guiltless," and that in doing so they are truly the "guilty."³²⁵ With this declaration, Samantha reframed the victims of 1692 as categorically innocent and, along with Miller, located Salem's moral worth and notions of heroism with them. In this way,

³²² *Bewitched*, "Salem Saga," October 8, 1970.

³²³ *Bewitched*, "Salem Saga," October 8, 1970.

³²⁴ *Bewitched*, "Salem Saga," October 8, 1970.

³²⁵ *Bewitched*, "Samantha's Old Salem Trip," November 12, 1970.

Bewitched helped destigmatize interest in the witch trials, replacing images of hags and dishonor with innocent men and women whose individuality and bravery ought to be remembered and celebrated.

As noted by cinema scholar Walter Metz, *Bewitched* was not an overtly feminist show, even in its treatments of Salem witchcraft. “In the show, Samantha demonstrates significant discontent with the domestic role she is assigned... Yet nearly every episode ends with Samantha endorsing Darrin’s patriarchal dominance over her.”³²⁶ Criticism of the show is split between those who read it as anti-feminist, citing the return to patriarchal normalcy by the close of each episode, while others contend that the long-term narrative of Samantha continuously pushing against patriarchal restrictions make it progressive, opening a dialogue about the tensions and contradictions of gender relations.³²⁷

During the same period that *Bewitched* ran on air and *The Crucible* staged productions, however, feminist writers and activists unambiguously reclaimed the archetype of the witch and her historic counterparts to directly challenge patriarchy. Radical feminists politicized the witch figure, portraying her as a proto-feminist woman deliberately targeted and executed by “the patriarchy.”³²⁸ Ehrenreich’s and Deirdre English’s 1973 publication *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* was one of the earliest of these tracts, and it exemplified early feminist efforts to appropriate the witch for political commentary. They highlighted the ways in which

³²⁶ Walter Metz, *Bewitched* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), Online Edition, 93.

³²⁷ Metz, *Bewitched*, 92-98.

³²⁸ Claudia Opitz-Belakhal, “Witchcraft Studies from the Perspective of Women’s and Gender History: A Report on Recent Research,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 4 (2009), 90-99.

female health workers had been systematically denied authority within the medical profession as part of “an active *takeover*” by patriarchal men.³²⁹ This sidelining of women began during the witch hunts, when male doctors branded midwives as witches in order to execute and oppress them.³³⁰ This idea that midwives were peculiarly vulnerable to witchcraft charges or targeted outright by a male establishment has remained popular in the popular imagination but has been disproven by historians.³³¹ Ehrenreich and English describe the suppression of witches in order to underscore the discrimination of women in the medical field of the 1960s and 1970s.³³² “The women’s health movement of today,” they argue, “has ancient roots in the medieval covens, and its opponents have as their ancestors those who ruthlessly forced the elimination of witches.”³³³ This text also demonstrated a specific feminist ideology in which witchcraft persecutions amounted to a systematic war on women. They described witch trials as “a campaign of terror directed against the female peasant population” while accused witches constituted a “female-led peasant rebellion.”³³⁴

Mary Daly, a theologian at Boston College and one of the most notorious of these polemicists, credited the two for spreading awareness of the topic in her chapter on witchcraft from her 1978 book *Gyn/Ecology*.³³⁵ Like Ehrenreich and English, Daly

³²⁹ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses* (New York: Feminist Press, 1973), 28.

³³⁰ Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses*, 25-30. More recently, see Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

³³¹ For discussions of this in the British Isles, see David Harley, “Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife Witch,” *Social History of Medicine* 3 (1990), 1-26 and Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), 101.

³³² Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses*, 25.

³³³ Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses*, 33.

³³⁴ Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses*, 33, 35.

³³⁵ Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 221.

approached witchcraft as a transhistorical means of commenting on the woman's movement and female oppression in the 1960s and 1970s. She also followed their assumption that men motivated by misogyny, whom Daly refers to as "a secret gynocidal fraternity," implemented witch trials in order to reinforce patriarchal authority.³³⁶ She claimed, incorrectly, that Protestant and Catholic clergies colluded with men in the legal professions to purify society of deviant women over time.³³⁷ Despite this radical feminist counternarrative of witchcraft, Salem tourism ultimately pushed narratives that avoided any direct confrontations with patriarchy and, ultimately, upheld it. Tourism, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, contained the feminist potential of the witch by vilifying active women and pacifying the sympathetic ones, hiding them behind heroic male figures imbued with agency, rightful authority, and masculine civic virtues.

Notably, the positive reimagining of the witch in *Bewitched* conformed to an ideal of blonde, white, youthful femininity, leaving women of color like Tituba, Candy, or Mary Black out of this more positive reimagining of the witch as a cultural icon and historical figure. As shown in this and subsequent chapters, mainstream Salem tourism would replicate this pattern. By the 1980s, however, Black intellectuals such as Maryse Condé reimagined Tituba through the lens of Black feminist activism. Born in Guadeloupe, a French colony since the seventeenth century and an overseas department since 1946, Condé challenged the violence that colonialism and white supremacy inflicted upon Black bodies and culture.³³⁸ Building upon the work of Black literary

³³⁶ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 186.

³³⁷ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 185.

³³⁸ Ann Armstrong Scarboro, "Afterword," in Condé, *I, Tituba*, 187-191, 193.

movements of the mid-twentieth century that “promoted the validation of the [B]lack person’s ethnic identity and asserted the right to self-expression,” Condé’s novel, *I, Tituba*, not only recaptured a past erased by colonialism but “use[d] the lost past to dominate the present and open the future to new directions...she invites an examination of the entire system of slavery; she implies criticism of racism and religious bigotry in contemporary America; she castigates men’s domination of women; and she parodies modern feminist discourse.”³³⁹ *I, Tituba* narrated Tituba’s life from her own perspective. Tituba, portrayed as a Black woman and magical practitioner, narrates the course of her own life from her birth, enslavement, removal to Massachusetts, and eventually the Witch Trials. Her Tituba is complex, sympathetic, and a figure of feminist resistance against the intertwined systems of racism, colonialism, and misogyny that oppressed her. As Angela Davis noted in her analysis of *I, Tituba*’s importance, reclaiming her humanity and place in history is Tituba’s “revenge” which “allows her to save herself without taking on the historical characteristics of the colonizers and the slaveholders she detested.”³⁴⁰ The depictions of Tituba that characterized nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations, Davis argues, perpetuated the “silences, omissions, distortions, and fleeting, enigmatic insinuations” that elide the histories of people of color from “the story of the colonization of this continent.”³⁴¹ Through her novel, Condé allows Tituba to “[speak] her life in her own voice,” and by extension aid “we who are Tituba’s cultural kin [to] experience the possibilities of our own history. Via an active, constitutive voice,

³³⁹ Scaroboro, “Afterword,” 190.

³⁴⁰ Davis, “Foreward,” xi.

³⁴¹ Davis, “Foreward,” xi.

Tituba leaps into history, shattering all the racist and misogynist misconceptions that have defined the place of black women.”³⁴² Although some portrayals, such as that of the Salem Witch Museum, discussed below, are more sympathetic to Tituba, depicting her as a victim of 1692 rather than a conniving perpetrator, this sympathy appears conditional on stripping her of the intelligence or agency that Davis identifies as so vital to inclusive histories. Broadly, however, rather than draw upon Condé’s work, Salem tourism in the second half of the twentieth century upheld otherized depictions of Tituba as the instigator of Salem witchcraft out of malice or haplessness in ways that upheld white patriarchy as rightful and necessary for social functioning.

Prior to the 1970s, the city had largely distanced itself from associations with witchcraft, or at least “regarded this view of their town as mildly amusing,” preferring to market itself on the basis of its role in the maritime trade and architectural history.³⁴³ The Chamber of Commerce’s “Historic Salem, Massachusetts” guides in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, summarized the entire witchcraft episode in three sentences:

“The most remembered incident in Salem’s history is the witchcraft hysteria of 1692 when 19 men and women were hanged for supposedly practicing the diabolical arts. The Witch House, home of Judge Jonathan Curwen, where some preliminary examinations of witches were held, can be visited to-day. (It should be noted that the Massachusetts courts in 1693 excluded witchcraft as a triable offence, a reform not effected elsewhere for nearly a century.)”³⁴⁴

Though the “most remembered incident” in the city’s past, rhetorically it appeared as incidental to the more illustrious history of maritime wealth and contributions of the Revolutionary War. By the 1970s, however, Salem’s economy had slowed under

³⁴² Davis, “Foreward,” xii.

³⁴³ Hill, “Salem as Witch City,” 285.

³⁴⁴ “Historic Salem Massachusetts,” Brochure, Salem Chamber of Commerce, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1967.

deindustrialization while *The Crucible*, *Bewitched*, and the arrival of a highly visible Wiccan community spurred a surge of touristic interest in the city. To revitalize its economy, the city capitalized on its reputation as “The Witch City.” The existing tourist landscape, defined primarily by surviving historic structures like the Witch House, expanded to include new, for-profit museums, most notably the Salem Witch Museum in 1972, followed by the Witch History Museum and the Witch Dungeon.³⁴⁵

With some references to travel guides from the latter half of the twentieth century, this chapter focuses on the interpretive pattern established by the Salem Witch Museum, which has been so influential in the landscape of witchcraft tourism. The Witch History Museum and Witch Dungeon follows much of the tone and narrative understandings of the trials as the Witch Museum, but as their interpretation relies heavily on contemporary docent-led interpretation they are discussed at greater length in Chapter Three. Many residents of Salem in the 1970s objected to the creation of a commercial museum dedicated to the Salem Witch Trials, finding profiting off of the witch trials distasteful and disrespectful.³⁴⁶ The Witch Museum’s exhibit on Salem Witchcraft reflects the tensions between interpreting tragedy and creating an entertaining, profitable tourist narrative. Thus, the opening interpretation pronounces the museum the “voice of the innocent” before launching into a theatrical retelling of the Salem Witch Trials, as described below.³⁴⁷ This established the museum as a moral and historical authority on

³⁴⁵ Hill, “Salem as Witch City,” 284-287.

³⁴⁶ Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

³⁴⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018.

the witch trials and as a recreational venue. These tensions in museum performance are discussed at length in Chapter Three.

The Witch Museum, located in a former church, used the height of its central interpretive space to display a series of tableaux representing various scenes from the witch trials lit in sequence as recorded narration explains the history of the witch trials from Puritan fears of the devil, the first incidents of affliction, through the hangings and eventual cessation of the trials. Critically, Boyer and Nissenbaum did not publish their landmark study of Salem Witchcraft until 1974, and as a result much of the interpretation in the Witch Museum derives from the same sources that defined witchcraft tourism since the nineteenth century, particularly the work of Charles Upham.³⁴⁸ The voiceover is sinister, as is the atmosphere created by dim lighting, red backlighting for certain tableaux and a circle of the victims' names on the floor. It also features an enormous devil figure with glowing red eyes to illustrate the possible presence of the Devil in Massachusetts. In characterizing the Witch Trials as a terrifying moment of complete social breakdown, it elevates its male figures to "heroes" of moral fortitude and civic values in the face of chaos and evil represented by the afflicted girls. According an informational interview, the narration has remained largely unchanged since its opening in the 1970s, with only a few snippets of the original recording cut for inaccuracies.³⁴⁹

The voiceover narration begins by explaining that Puritans lived in a world dominated by fear, particularly fear of the Devil. Young women such as Ann Putnam,

³⁴⁸ Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*; Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

³⁴⁹ Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

one of the most prolific afflicted children in the witch trials, suffered particularly in dreary lives dominated by housework. They could only express themselves through hysterical fits. Ann in particular lived in a somber world dominated by her mother, Ann Putnam Sr., who had lost most of her children and sought to contact them supernaturally. Ann Jr., along with a circle of other girls in Salem Village, met regularly to perform such forbidden tricks. A tableau depicting Tituba in the kitchen of the Parris' parsonage lights before the audience as the narrator states that she, identified as a Black woman, taught these Puritan girls stories and tricks from Africa, inadvertently prompting their fits of bewitchment. Reverend Parris called in a physician to examine the children in his household as their troubling behaviors seemingly spread through other children of the village. The adults diagnosed witchcraft and questioned the girls to discern who had bewitched them. Accusations flew, leading to the arrest of Tituba and many others, including the respectable Rebecca Nurse. A series of tableau represents Nurse's trial, the imprisonment of John and Elizabeth Proctor, and the execution of George Burroughs, described in more detail below. The exhibit ends with a scene of an adult Ann Putnam in church. A voice actor depicting her minister reads out her apology for her role in the Salem Witch Trials before the congregation and the audience of tourists. Finally, the narrator concludes that visitors should be "proud" that "we" only succumbed to superstitious fears once in a world as frightful as that of the seventeenth century.³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ According to an informational interview in 2018, this central interpretation was possibly to be re-done in 2020, although staff could not speak to what the re-interpretation would be as it was still a work in progress. Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

White Men

Like travel writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, tourist attractions and boosters of the 1970s and 1980s incorporated the Salem Witch Trials into a triumphalist narrative that sought to rehabilitate male civic leadership. Visitors to the Salem Witch Museum, for instance, were urged to take “pride” in the fact that, given the prevalence of ignorance and superstition in the seventeenth century, Salemites only succumbed “once” and “briefly” to such delusions, and never on the scale of their European counterparts who ostensibly killed “millions.”³⁵¹ Indeed after this brief “mania” – a term suggesting people in 1692 had no control over their actions – witchcraft delusions ended forever in the colonies.³⁵² This overthrow of an age of “dreams” of “Satanic evil” came about through the assertion of qualities such as reason, moral strength, physical bravery, and fortitude, attributed only to male actors in the museum’s narration. The antiquated, dangerous qualities of malice, hysteria, and superstition, attached in the narration to the afflicted girls, although men are shown to have believed in witches as well.³⁵³ Unlike earlier interpretations, however, late-twentieth century writers did not explicitly invest in rehabilitating the reputations of traditional patriarchal figures – judges, ministers, landowners – on the basis of their class. Rather, they shifted their

³⁵¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Pagan movements, feminist writers, and historians repeating the miscalculations and faked figures of eighteenth-century historians placed execution estimates in the millions. Norman Cohn (1975) and Richard Kieckhefer (1976) challenged these assumptions, and historians since have revised estimates of total executed persons in Europe and America to the tens of thousands, perhaps as high as 90,000 to 100,000 according to Malcolm Gaskill. See Norman Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61-77.

³⁵² Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁵³ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

narrative emphasis towards white men invested with moral authority, figuring men such as John Proctor, Giles Corey, and George Burroughs as embodiments of physical resilience in the face of torture or imprisonment, patriarchal control and protection over dependent women, integrity in the face of cruelty, and outspoken opponents of the legal chaos around them. The rationality, self-possession, and decency that characterize these men contrast sharply with the hysterics, superstition, and chaos instigated by the female figures in the interpretation offered by travel guides and new for-profit museum attractions. In this way, tourism invested social worth and legitimate authority in whiteness and manhood. Validating white patriarchy emerges as a central concern of Salem tourism in the late-twentieth century as travel narratives upheld white men as the embodiments of American values and modernity, heroic martyrs whose courage and moral example ended the superstition of earlier, European superstitions and laid the foundations of a modern United States.

The men who actually wielded power in Salem – wealthy elites like Thomas Putnam, the judges, and ministers – are relatively minimized in Salem interpretation. Tourists could not see white patriarchal institutions as threatening if they do not appear in any meaningful way in the narrative to begin with. The *Be-Witched* guides of the 1960s and 1970s, written by Henry Nichols, a local booster and former director of the Chamber of Commerce, for instance, did not discuss particular judges or magistrates in its overall introduction to the witch trials at the beginning of the guide. Only if tourists got to page 43 and the description of the Witch House would they learn that Judges Corwin and Hathorne had presided over the trials. Corwin “could have made a name for himself when

he interviewed those innocent people...He could have declared them not guilty and defied the wish of the masses.”³⁵⁴ Even when the guides depicted Corwin and Hathorne as morally responsible for upholding the will of “the masses” instead of justice, however, they also noted that they had “no legal training” despite their position on the court and relied on the testimony of “teen-aged girls.” This distanced the American legal tradition and its great men from the taint of the failures of the court system in 1692 and presented them as illegitimate patriarchs, in contrast to the “leading citizens [who] began to question the testimony, and to have some doubts.”³⁵⁵ At the Witch Museum, the interpretation might depict Cotton Mather condemning George Burroughs at his execution or name the judge involved in Rebecca Nurse’s trial, but the afflicted girls instigated the charges, drove the action in the court rooms, and exerted so much public influence that Salem’s judges “gave into the screaming of hysterical girls.”³⁵⁶ In this way, the functioning of the courts seems to have been entirely taken over by unruly young women instead of the men actually in power in colonial society.

The *Best of Salem* guide series in the 1980s recounted how a group of young girls fell into strange fits after learning magic tricks from Tituba, “were asked” to implicate who had bewitched them, after which point “the number of children [among the afflicted]

³⁵⁴ Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 43. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 43. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 43. “Nichols Square,” City of Salem, <https://www.salem.com/veterans-services/pages/nichols-square>

³⁵⁵ Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 43-4. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 43-4. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 43-4.

³⁵⁶ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

grew.”³⁵⁷ The trials ended when “prominent ministers and political leaders” denounced the use of spectral evidence, thereby ensuring that the “testimony of the afflicted girls was useless,” and Governor Phipps freed those imprisoned.³⁵⁸ In the *Best Of* guides, only the children appear clearly in this summation of the witch trials themselves. The use of the passive voice distances the girls from whomever directed their actions during these inquiries, and the class of adult men who actually oversaw them appear only to set Salem to rights by rationalizing the legal system and doing away with the illegitimacy represented by the girls’ testimony. Thus, the institutional failures of the Salem Witch Trials resulted from their usurpation by illegitimate actors – women, girls, and people of color – rather than the white men who ran them. This shifts agency and the concomitant culpability from the people who actually exercised authority to their dependents, the women and people of color described below, who were in actuality the most vulnerable to abuses of state and social power.

Tourist discourses further distance men from abuses of systemic power imbalances by abstracting religious zealotry and social oppression into amorphous forces that shaped the pressures and mentalities that led to the Salem Witch Trials but with no clear sense of who really imposed them. At the Witch Museum, for instance, tourists learned that Puritan religion generally instilled intense fear of the Devil and restricted

³⁵⁷ “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem and The North Shore: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1982), 28-29, 32-33; “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem and The North Shore: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1988), 9-10; “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem and The North Shore: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1984), 22-3.

³⁵⁸ “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem and The North Shore: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1982), 29; “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem and The North Shore: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1988), 10, 33; “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem and The North Shore: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1984), 23.

girls' leisure time and ability to socialize with boys, not that religion and gender hierarchies were and are deeply intertwined in constructions of femininity and the enforcement of social norms that fed witchcraft accusations.³⁵⁹ This reading also seems to owe more to white middle-class constructions of teenage girlhood structured by leisure and heterosociability than seventeenth-century New England. *The Witchcraft Hysteria of Salem Town and Salem Village in 1692* (1991, 1992, 1995, 1997) guide, published in conjunction with the tercentennial events in Danvers and Salem, noted merely that the girls must have been “bored with the rather grim, restrictive life of puritanical New England” without regard to the gendering of such restrictions.³⁶⁰ Attractions and guides apply this same rhetorical distancing to discussion of misogyny, discussed in more detail below. Notably, interpretation ties the sense of oppression and legal breakdown of 1692 to Puritan mentalities specifically, ensuring that the failures of the law, social constructions, and religion are historically contained. By tying the mentalities and understandings of authority that contributed to the witchcraft crisis of 1692 and eliding the elements of patriarchy and colonialism that undergirded them, attractions and travel literature presented them as failures of a particular historical period rather than a system of white patriarchy that continued to structure American life in the 1970s and 1980s. The lack of attention paid to white patriarchy in shaping how individuals and communities experienced religious and social power in unequal ways hid them from view, preventing their interrogation by tourists. In doing so, the legitimacy or wisdom of investing such a

³⁵⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁶⁰ William Story, *The Witchcraft Hysteria of Salem Town and Salem Village in 1692* (Peabody: WILLART Publishing, 1997), 2

disproportionate amount of power in white men could remain unquestioned, and tourists would never be asked to confront their own positionality in regards to such a fraught system of power.

The interpretation of this period validated white patriarchy not only by mitigating its role in 1692 but by centering heroism and agency in white men. The Witch Museum literally referred to men like John Proctor as “heroes” for maintaining their rationality amidst the hysteria, bravely speaking out against the Court of Oyer and Terminer and openly condemning the afflicted children.³⁶¹ Through this defiance, Proctor acted as his community’s conscience. The interpretation at the Witch Museum also depicted George Burroughs reciting the Lord’s Prayer on the gallows as proof of his innocence, awakening the consciences of witnesses to the execution before being finally condemned by Cotton Mather. Meanwhile, Giles Corey could recognize the error of his former support from the witch trials, turn against them at the risk of his own life, and go to his death refusing to cooperate with his torturers.³⁶² The *Be-witched in Salem* travel guides from the 1970s also centered men as the moral leaders of their communities. In describing the end of the witch trials, the author of these guides stated that Corey had initially believed in witchcraft, but “seeing the wickedness of the whole proceedings, he had not hesitated to confess his error and denounce what had been done,” even though this led to his death.³⁶³ In fact, his defiance of the court led Salem to turn against the witch trials. The deaths of

³⁶¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁶² Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁶³ Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 9.

men like Corey lingered in Salem's conscience as a reminder of the need for "logic and democracy."³⁶⁴ In this way, tourist materials suggested that men possessed the right, responsibility, and the impulse to provide moral leadership for their communities. Particularly when contrasted by the actions and motivations of female actors, in these interpretations, men appeared particularly well-suited to lead.

Besides conferring moral authority, white men in witchcraft tourism also appeared as the intellectual leaders of their communities. They decried the ignorance of the witch trials and superstition, daring to question the legitimacy of the legal proceedings. Indeed, these male "heroes" went to their deaths rather than comply with such error. Visitors to the Witch Museum, for instance, learned that John Proctor rejected the legitimacy of the court because he saw witchcraft prosecutions in general as absurd and acceding to the claims of children as madness.³⁶⁵ As shown below, women, girls, and the enslaved Tituba typically exemplified seventeenth-century superstition, and even the accused women do not appear to have the same sort of moral or intellectual opposition to the cases against them.

Rebecca Nurse, for instance, appears twice in the Witch Museum's interpretation. As the lights of the museum come up on a scene depicting her trial, tourists learn that she was a frail old woman, hard of hearing, indeed barely capable of moving under her own strength. Despite being a virtuous member of the community, the "hysterical" afflicted girls accused her of witchcraft, claiming that her spirit tormented them. Her good

³⁶⁴ Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 9.

³⁶⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

reputation made the people of Salem suspicious of the charges against her, and indeed tourists hear the jury return an initial verdict of “not guilty.” Girlish shrieking plays through the museum’s speakers until the voice of a judge urges the jury to reconsider its opinion. The narrator explains that during this re-examination, the elderly Nurse could not hear the questions asked of her and did not reply, raising the suspicions of the court. She was “old,” “exhausted,” and too “worn-out” to make a defense. She is found guilty, and a chorus of cheers erupts. Later, tourists view a tableau of the Salem jail where Rebecca Nurse sits in one of the cells, weighed down by chains. The narrator tells them that the afflicted girls claimed that her specter continued to torture them, so Nurse had to pay for chains that would trap her spirit within her body.³⁶⁶ The historical Nurse was indeed seventy-one years old, hard of hearing, and did possibly fail to respond to a court official’s question under re-examination.³⁶⁷ However, she also took an active role in her own defense, working with her family to gather testimonies supporting her innocence when she came under suspicion of witchcraft. She maintained her innocence throughout the proceedings and declared that she was “innocent as the child unborn,” viewing the charges against her as divine punishment for some earlier sin she had committed.³⁶⁸ Further, Nurse’s reputation for piety should not be conflated with passivity; neighbors testified that she had bewitched them after Rebecca went to their house and “fell a railing” at them for allowing their pigs to get into her yard, and “continued railing and scolding” them while she instructed her son to kill the pigs so they would cause no more

³⁶⁶ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁶⁷ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 32.

³⁶⁸ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 31-32, 157.

damage.³⁶⁹ Yet none of this agency or mental vigor enter the Witch Museum's characterization of Nurse, the particular contours of her religious faith are elided, and the narration silences her completely. Meanwhile, the even older Giles Corey defies his torturers to add "more weight" in a scene depicting him being crushed by rocks. The voiceless Nurse functions as a vehicle for showing the cruelty and excesses of the afflicted girls.

Similarly, Elizabeth Proctor lost the agency and principle of Miller's play and historical records. In actuality, Elizabeth Proctor was arrested with Sarah Cloyce (the sister of Rebecca Nurse) and spoke in her own defense under examination by the court.³⁷⁰ The Witch Museum's interpretation of the Proctors affords her no such agency, however. After viewing Rebecca Nurse's trial in which courts acceded to the "screaming of hysterical girls," a tableau depicting John Proctor is lit and audiences turn to hear that he was one of the few "men" who acted as "heroes" in 1692 by displaying "reason" and "principles" even in the face of death.³⁷¹ The voiceover tells visitors that he openly condemned the witch trials and hit his own servant when she claimed to be bewitched, temporarily putting an end to her afflictions. In retaliation for his defiance, the afflicted accused his pregnant wife. He took the stand at her trial to defend her. Elizabeth's testimony does not appear in the interpretation. Accused of witchcraft himself, "this brave man and his wife" go to prison.³⁷² The Proctors appear again in the prison tableau,

³⁶⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 151.

³⁷⁰ Miller, *The Crucible*; "SWP No. 106: Elizabeth Proctor," *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, University of Virginia, <http://saalem.lib.virginia.edu/n106.html>

³⁷¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁷² Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

with John writing a letter thanking those who defended him and Elizabeth while she sits in her cell. The audience learns that while John himself hanged, he successfully saved his wife because the fact of her pregnancy meant that she could not be hanged prior to giving birth. The witch trials ended before she gave birth, and so she survived.³⁷³ Again, the interpretation renders accused women passive victims in need of defense by others. Their interiorities and historical agency merit no interpretation, and their mute figures serve only as devices in the stories of others.

Again, men appear as natural leaders most disposed to intellectual individualism and exertion, capable of condemning and eventually overcoming the irrational belief systems embodied by the afflicted girls. By questioning the superstition of the witch trials, figures such as John Proctor also appear to use their reason for the well-being of others. Through interpretations of John Proctor especially, given his denunciation of the folly and ignorance embodied by young women and people of color, white men also appear as the best suited to exert reason and control on behalf of others less given to rationality and intellectual leadership. Further, by ending the witch trials, men such as Governor Phips and the examples of Corey, Burroughs, and Proctor ushered in a more just and rational age.³⁷⁴ In this way, the region and indeed Western civilization owe modernity and progress to these men.

³⁷³ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁷⁴ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. "Witchcraft," *Best of Salem: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1982), 28. Also "Witchcraft," *Best of Salem: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1988), 9, 32; "Witchcraft," *Best of Salem: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1984), 22; Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 9.

The valorization of action and vitality in constructions of male victims of the witch trials genders rightful public agency as male. As noted above, the Witch Museum defined John Proctor by his outspokenness in condemning the witch trials and the afflicted girls and depicted him beating his servant until she stopped exhibiting bewitchment, actively denouncing Abigail Williams in court, and taking the stand to testify in defense of his wife. The *Be-witched* travel guides depicted images of Giles Corey at his pressing, George Jacobs' trial, and John Proctor's execution, while recounting his resistance to the trials in court.³⁷⁵ These men are martyred on the strength of their conviction. By contrast, women like Rebecca Nurse are depicted as facing their trials and executions passively, defended by others rather than by their own words in court. Thus, witchcraft tourism upheld notions of idealized white masculinity characterized by strength of will, bravery, physical endurance, and defiance. White men therefore have the moral and mental capacities for leadership as well as the will and ability to do so.

Interpretation located heroism in these men while also eliding abuses they committed enabled by class and gender. For instance, the Witch Museum narration and many travel guides did not mention Giles Corey's conviction for beating a servant so badly he subsequently died of his injuries, or suspicions of domestic abuse, around George Burroughs.³⁷⁶ Indeed, failures adhering to normative masculinity, particularly abuses of patriarchal authority, seem to have been a critical factor in determining which

³⁷⁵ Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 8-9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 8-9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 8-9.

³⁷⁶ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 148-150; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 128-130, 154.

men came under suspicion of witchcraft in New England witchcraft, demonstrated by scholars such as John Demos (1982) by the early 1980s. At trial, the afflicted testified that Burroughs had spectrally confessed to killing both of his wives. While these murder accusations may have been spurious, some historians speculate that Burroughs, given his “controlling” and quarrelsome reputation and the nature of these charges, may have committed domestic violence.³⁷⁷ Further, other male victims who did not conform to twentieth-century notions of masculinity did not figure in interpretation. Samuel Wardwell, for instance, attracted suspicions of witchcraft for his work in fortune-telling.³⁷⁸ The twinned efforts to erase things like domestic violence, often a function of patriarchal power relations, and essentialize qualities like superstition and dependency as female allows tourism to uphold white patriarchy as heroic and necessary. The effort to build up these white men as heroes and invest them with the virtue of the region positions them as rightful public actors, and perhaps suggests an anxiety about naturalizing their fitness for authority in the face of the social upheavals of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Valorizing men who lived within patriarchal bounds and eliding or minimizing men and male behaviors that challenged it could attempt to resolve these anxieties.

Critical interrogation of white patriarchy could be incorporated into tourist scripts in numerous ways. Firstly, it could be incorporated into the intellectual and religious frameworks underpinning seventeenth-century beliefs in witchcraft and the Devil and actually named as a reason for women’s disproportionate numbers among the accused.

³⁷⁷ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 147. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 36-93.

³⁷⁸ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 134.

Secondly, sites might interpret how gendered sociability informed who gained reputations for witchcraft, as seen in the violence of Giles Corey. Adult male householders who initiated court actions on behalf of their families could also be incorporated more fully into the interpretation. For instance, Thomas Putnam came from one of the most propertied families in the area, had numerous conflicts with his neighbors, and was one of the most active men in the Witch Trials, serving both in an official capacity taking depositions and as the initiator of cases against thirty-five people. His wife, daughter, and servant were among the most active of the accusers as well, making the Putnams' participation in the witch trials a family affair.³⁷⁹ By unpacking the roles of the Putnam family, instead of singling out the young Ann Putnam Junior for blame as one of the afflicted girls, interpreters could discuss how patriarchy operated as a dynamic force within particular homes and within larger community networks. Attractions could unpack how unusual it was for women, particularly young women, to take such a prominent role in court proceedings and complicate the power dynamics between the children and teenagers among the accused and the adult men who occupied official positions in the legal, political, and religious institutions of the time. Interpreters could also relate how proximity to white patriarchal power afforded critical legal, social, and economic protection. For instance, Thomas Putnam would be an unlikely witch, while women generally had few legal rights and limited abilities to participate in court (their husbands had to represent their interests), and those without husbands or sons tended to be the most vulnerable to witchcraft accusations. Women marginalized by

³⁷⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 15-16, 120.

deviant behavior and poverty were even more at risk.³⁸⁰ Patriarchy in the seventeenth-century could be discussed as a complicated, interactive, constantly evolving system challenged and upheld by both women and men in various ways according to their racialized and classed identities as well as their individual actions within that system. By naming misogyny, patriarchy, and colonialism, giving them historical specificity, and illustrating the ways in which they are the product of systemic inequalities rather than personal failures, interpreters could use 1692 to illustrate how these forces are maintained in modern American life in myriad ways, ranging from the criminal justice system to connections between gendered sociability, social worth, and the ways in which those who challenge these norms are contained or punished.

Overall, the interpretation of white men in the Salem Witch Trials created in the 1970s and 1980s points to anxieties that white patriarchy as a source of stability might be in jeopardy given the upheavals of the Civil Rights Movement and Women's Liberation. For instance, the framing of girls and Tituba as the instigators and drivers of the witch trials paired with the outsized narrative emphasis on male victims positions men as the actual victims of women and people of color. Giles Corey, John Proctor, and George Burroughs did not die because male juries, male ministers, or male judges condemned them, but because they crossed a group of "hysterical" girls whipped into a frenzy by Tituba and incited their spiteful revenge against them.³⁸¹ Again, patriarchy appears non-

³⁸⁰ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 127-128.

³⁸¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 9. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 9.

threatening, and culpability for social disorder gets shifted from the actual white men in power to women, particularly Black women. However, it also points to fears about the fragility of white patriarchy as a system, and what could happen to men and white people generally if women and people of color attained equal or greater access to power.

White Women

By the 1970s, Salem tourism seems to have latched on to Miller's depictions of unruly teenage girls as the instigators of the witch hysteria, motivated by petty jealousies and boredom to accuse their neighbors of witchcraft. As discussed in Chapter One, earlier nineteenth- and early twentieth-century histories and travel literature presented the afflicted children as children, emphasizing the failures of their parents and other adults who could not control them or influenced them to pursue witchcraft accusations. By mid-century, however, interpretation seems to have reflected cultural anxieties about the disruptive potential of youth as well as the "ambivalence of both teen rebellion and teen conformity" embodied by young women.³⁸² As adolescence became an increasingly visible cultural construct over the course of the twentieth century and came to symbolize rebellion and "cultural resistance" by the 1960s, subsequent generations of adults imbued youth culture with deviant characteristics and "culturally revolutionary possibilities" that allowed them to embody anxieties about cultural, political, and economic

³⁸² Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 68.

transformations.³⁸³ Perhaps because constructions of the teenager resembled constructions of femininity in general – dependent, immature, caught between “containment and freedom and between conformity and agency” – young women particularly became flashpoints for conversations about women’s roles in American society during moments of upheaval in understandings of gender relations.³⁸⁴ These points of tension appeared particularly acute in the latter half of the twentieth century as patriarchal control over the home declined.³⁸⁵ In this way, the afflicted girls of Salem may have operated as a discursive tool for negotiating women’s autonomy and fitness for full participation in political, economic, and cultural life following the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

By the 1950s, discourses on adolescence constructed girls as “inherently difficult” and “invoked the girl as a problem in and of herself.”³⁸⁶ Academics, popular media, and guidance manuals for parents and educators increasingly stressed the importance of “better training” for young, white, middle-class women entering adolescence. According to Ilana Nash, by the 1960s, teenage girls occupied a dualistic cultural space, appearing either as a “quasi-angelic creature, praised for her bubbly charm, her obedience to authority, and her chastity, or else she was an exasperating agent of chaos who challenged the boundaries and hierarchies of a patriarchally organized society.”³⁸⁷ Nash

³⁸³ See Driscoll, *Girls*; John Modell, *Into One’s Own: From Youth to Adulthood in the United States 1920-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) and Ilana Nash, *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

³⁸⁴ Driscoll, *Girls*, 58, 68.

³⁸⁵ Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 25.

³⁸⁶ Driscoll, *Girls*, 70-1.

³⁸⁷ Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 2.

finds that although depictions of youthful femininity varied from the 1970s – due in part to the feminist movement and anxieties about hippie culture – representations of young women continued to draw heavily upon these stereotypes of girls as unstable and lacking in “integrity.”³⁸⁸ Teenage girls functioned not as fully-dimensional human beings but as archetypes of society’s “nightmares,” as an “Other to an unnamed but implicit ‘self’: adult men.”³⁸⁹ Mass culture constructed adolescent women as “irrational, ignorant, [and] mildly crazy,” offering them up as exercises in the need to assert “the power of reason” over “the threat posed by uncontrollable nature.”³⁹⁰ This characterization of adolescent femininity deployed young women as symbols of disruption and mystery in contrast to rational, adult men. By shifting blame for the Salem Witch Trials away from adult men at the expense of teenage girls, witchcraft tourism naturalized patriarchal hierarchies and essentialized disorder as feminine.

Witchcraft tourism of the 1970s and 1980s reflects this cultural contempt for teenage girls and anxieties about young, independent femininity by placing the afflicted children front and center of the 1692 crisis. One 1997 guide particularly identified “girls and women who accused others of witchcraft” in their interpretation of the Salem Village Parsonage Site where the Parris family lived in 1692 (with only the stone foundation remaining).³⁹¹ The *Be-witched* guides claimed that, when asked to identify the witches who tormented them, the girls “blamed people who had done them no harm, but whom

³⁸⁸ Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 18, 27.

³⁸⁹ Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 2, 12.

³⁹⁰ Nash, *American Sweethearts*, 22.

³⁹¹ Story, *The Witchcraft Hysteria of Salem Town and Salem Village in 1692*, 9.

they did not like.”³⁹² These descriptions of the afflicted girls, and the degree of power imputed to them, intensified at attractions like the Witch Museum, which used descriptions of malicious, even evil, young girls taking over the attention of their community and the running of the courts to evoke an atmosphere of horror. Its interpretation claimed that that the girls got “carried away” in pursuing the conviction of Rebecca Nurse, rather than the grown men who actually had authority over the legal proceedings. The Witch Museum and travel guides of the period depicted their motives for exhibiting bewitchment and testifying in court as stemming wholly from shallowness, vindictiveness, boredom, and a desire for attention. The Witch Museum described them with terms like “vengeful,” “maddened,” “emotional,” “hysterical,” and motivated by “sport.”³⁹³ While it is certainly possible that some of the young girls did participate in the witch trials for these reasons, it seems unlikely that none of them would have been motivated by the same religious imperatives, deep-seated fear of witchcraft, psychological stresses as adults or that that they would not have been subjected to pressure by the most powerful men in their colony to comply with the legal proceedings. These narratives almost entirely erased the extensive participation of adult colonists of both genders as well, further shifted the blame from communities in crisis or institutional powers to female children.

³⁹² Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 8. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 8. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 8.

³⁹³ Salem Witch Museum, Site visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

The readiness with which the attractions presented such a simplistically malicious image of the afflicted girls as the explanation for such a complicated phenomenon as the Salem Witch Trials points to the degree to which American culture vilified teenage girls and feared their capacity to act outside the direct view and control of men. Although there is nothing in the historical record to suggest that they did so, various interpretations of the witch trials in the second half of the twentieth century located the beginnings of the witch trials in clandestine meetings of young girls who, to avoid getting in trouble once discovered, began showing the first signs of bewitchment in Salem. For instance, Miller portrayed a group of young women dancing with Tituba in the woods as the beginning of the trials in *The Crucible*, while a tableau depicting the Parris' parsonage kitchen in the Witch Museum shows a group of girls gathered around Tituba.³⁹⁴ Voiceover tells visitors that these children met to learn forbidden tricks and stories, something made all the more taboo by the fact that they met in the home of a minister, and eventually claimed to be bewitched.³⁹⁵ These portrayals of the afflicted children completely belied the fact that twelve-year-old children could not initiate a court case; the Salem Witch Trials could only go forward if their fathers or other adult men found witchcraft cases to be credible or otherwise beneficial for the household. Despite the fact that the Salem Witch Trials could only have occurred with the enthusiastic participation of white men, tourism of this period suggests that they resulted from the actions of a handful of teenage girls, and

³⁹⁴ Miller, *The Crucible*; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁹⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

indeed their power over adult men particularly connotes civil disorder, injustice, and “evil.”³⁹⁶

The afflicted girls’ central role in tourist narratives was to instigate the witch trials and escalate the scale of the crisis through their interference in public life outside the control of grown men. This can be seen by the ways in which men who uphold patriarchal dominance are praised while those who “gave way” to the girls are vilified. At the Salem Witch Museum, for instance, part of John Proctor’s presentation as a man of reason was that he spanked his servant to temporarily “cure” her of her afflictions.³⁹⁷ Essentially, he could be read as an example of heroic masculinity because he asserted control over his female dependents. The patriarchal failure at the heart of the Salem Witch Trials then was failing to control the women around them and allowing the teenage girls to exert public influence. The Witch Museum condemned the judges for being ruled by “hysterical” girls, while it praised Proctor for controlling the girl in his household.³⁹⁸ Given that, as the museum and travel guides noted, colonial New Englanders accepted the Devil and witches as absolute reality, there is no reason why young women would be seen as less credible than their adult male counterparts other than their age and their gender. Girlhood essentially operated as shorthand for disorder and illegitimacy. The vilification of teenagers and the bifurcation between heroic men who controlled women and those who deferred to them points to anxieties about women’s power amidst the

³⁹⁶ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁹⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

³⁹⁸ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

feminist movement and about young women in the 1970s shortly after the moment when “the teenager” was conceptualized.

Not only were these girls out of the control of patriarchs, but they lacked control over themselves. Despite the cunning attributed to them in manipulating the witch trials for attention and a taste of power, the girls also appear as irrational. The Witch Museum described them as “maddened,” out of control of their emotions. Their hysterical fits were “wild, destructive emotional outbursts,” and they chafed not only against the heavy labor demanded by colonial living but by restrictions on their ability to be “frivolous” and meet “boys.”³⁹⁹ Thus, the museum broadly depicted the afflicted according to stereotypical constructions of teenage femininity: flighty, shallow, boy-crazy, over-emotional, and prone to outbursts. This characterization of young women as fundamentally incapable of self-command underlined the necessity of patriarchy to help teenagers govern themselves and by extension curtail their wider chaotic influence.

The Witch Museum does mention that seventeenth-century girls experienced a great deal of oppression in Puritan society, but then frames their inability to live under such control as possibly causing their outbursts of hysteria. When they became frustrated with their circumstances, they lashed out for power and attention in 1692. At the Witch Museum, tourists hear that the afflicted girls fell into frenzies, trapped under Puritanical strictures that prevented them from having fun with no other outlet for expressing themselves.⁴⁰⁰ In this formulation, however, the instability of 1692 seemingly stemmed

³⁹⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴⁰⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

not from misogyny and structural inequality but from the young girls who lashed out under the weight of it. As noted above, placing most of the blame for the witch trials on the afflicted girls suggests that such restrictive misogyny was necessary then and necessary now for protecting society from girls' chaotic natures.

Further, by suggesting that seventeenth-century girls were oppressed by Puritan society rather than misogyny within it, sexism appeared as a historically-contained phenomena, left behind in the past with belief in witches rather than a structural and enduring part of American life. This would allow tourists to view women's oppression as part of the past, something that they had progressed beyond now that they had had the women's liberation movement.⁴⁰¹ This could also mitigate anxieties raised by feminists by framing their critiques of modern gender relations as invalid; seeing Puritan misogyny as a historical phenomenon created a false narrative of progress that potentially positioned modern gender-oppression as exaggerated or even non-existent. This contained fears about destabilized gender relations amidst the feminist movement by allowing men to feel that sexism had been solved and that they could move on from abuses of the past without needing to interrogate their own actions and positionality.

In contrast to the dangerous and "evil" bewitched girls, female victims of the witch trials remained largely passive in 1970s and 1980s tourism, functioning largely as repositories for goodness around which white men act or as bodies upon which the violence of 1692 got inflicted. At the Witch Museum, as described above, Elizabeth

⁴⁰¹ See Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1991).

Proctor appeared as a defenseless woman who John defended to show heroic white masculinity, not as an accused witch who provided testimony on her own behalf.⁴⁰² The interpretation even frames her pregnancy as an instance of her husband's successful protection of her rather than an accident of timing that wound up saving her life.⁴⁰³ Rebecca Nurse also functioned as a symbol of vulnerability and victimization through a narrative emphasis on her physical frailty and the heroism of others in leaping to her defense. Descriptions of her at the Witch Museum lingered on her limited mobility, deafness, and exhaustion by the court proceedings that prevented her from speaking on her own behalf.⁴⁰⁴ Essentially, white femininity served a narrative value through associations with innocence that motivated others, particularly men, to take action in their defense. Again, white patriarchy appeared as necessary and for the benefit of white women. Even in the context of stories dominated by women like the Salem Witch Trials, they are were not seen as the actors of history. Rather, they were victimized and were defended by others.

The Witch Museum expressed sympathy for the female victims of the witch trials, whom they defined by passivity and reliance on men around them. They defined unsympathetic women, namely the accusers and afflicted, completely by their activity in public life and ability to manipulate male institutions and act in public life generally. This nearly complete divide between good/passive and bad/active women points towards a

⁴⁰² Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴⁰³ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴⁰⁴ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

construction of idealized femininity as principled, yes, but also subordinated to men and performances of masculinity.

Tourist attractions of the 1970s and 1980s also tended to ascribe this capacity for redemption for misdeeds during the witch trials mostly to white men. For instance, Ann Putnam, who accused a number of witches as a child and publicly repented before her congregation in Salem as an adult, was not represented nearly as often in tourist literature as Giles Corey, an eighty-year-old man at the time of his testimony in the witch trials, nor were her efforts to atone for her actions given the same sort of understanding. The Witch Museum, for instance, described Putnam as an “evil genius” for her role in the witch trials and states that she *attempted* to make amends for her past by having her pastor read a statement of repentance before her congregation as an adult.⁴⁰⁵ Corey could act and assert himself to seek redemption; Putnam has to ask for it. Corey could emerge from his ordeal as a martyr; Putnam’s public apology and struggles towards the end of her life took on the flavor of just desserts. This bifurcation of redemptive actions highlights the different standards of judgment for women and men, particularly as public actors. The obvious divide between men overcoming personal faults and women being defined entirely by their failures underlined the unsuitability for women to exercise authority in public life amidst the feminist movement of the 1970s.

Tituba and Native Erasure

⁴⁰⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

Interpretation in the second half of the twentieth century continued to center Tituba, coding the public power of a Black woman over white people as a signifier of social collapse while simultaneously drawing connections between 1692 and racism as examples of dangerous scapegoating in American history. In this way, Tituba could be deployed to negotiate post-civil rights anxieties about race, illustrating on the one hand a desire for subordinate people of color, but also a growing awareness among some white visitors that they should not be seen to be racist themselves. Critically, witchcraft interpretation of the 1970s variously depicted Tituba as Black or Native. This is likely due in part to literary depictions of Tituba as Black dating from the nineteenth century and culminating in Arthur Miller's African, voodoo-practicing character.⁴⁰⁶ Moreover, this also suggests a complacency with Black servility as well as assumptions about the disappearance of Native Americans from the New England landscape. For white American tourists after the Civil Rights movement, a Black Tituba threatening a white household and white social order may have represented the greater threat to white privilege. This also highlights the degree to which Black servility and Native erasure had been internalized by white Americans, as if "slave" was functionally synonymous with "Black" in the popular imagination.

The Salem Witch Museum showed Tituba literally and narratively as a perverse Mammy whose African stories frightened white girls into hysterics and became "the start of it all."⁴⁰⁷ Despite most likely having been a young indigenous woman, the museum

⁴⁰⁶ See Hansen, "The Metamorphosis of Tituba," 3-12.

⁴⁰⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

depicted her in a style reminiscent of Mammy imagery, as a middle-aged Black woman in a headwrap, presiding over the kitchen hearth and a group of white children. However, instead of providing food and maternal care, she taught them magic tricks.⁴⁰⁸ Similarly, the *Be-witched in Historic Salem* guides, published in eleven editions between 1967 and 1979, for instance, informed readers that “Tituba, who was ‘very proficient in the art of black magic,’ led a circle of girls in magical practices, while another guide from 1976 informed tourists that she taught the girls “voodoo and basic incantations.”⁴⁰⁹ This caused them to “believe strange things” and fall into fits.⁴¹⁰ The 1982 edition of *Best of Salem* asserted that the children exhibited their afflictions after learning magic from Tituba, who “claimed to know many magic spells because her father had been a tribal witch doctor.”⁴¹¹ The 1990 edition of the *Salem, Massachusetts: Alive With History* visitor’s guide included an essay that claimed she taught the girls “stories of voodoo and magic and witchcraft that she had learned as a young girl in the West Indies.”⁴¹² Even the historic marker for the Salem Village Parsonage erected by the Danvers Historical Commission in 1974 marked it as the site where “Tituba, Rev. Parris’ slave, told the girls of the household stories of witchcraft which nurtured the village witchcraft hysteria and

⁴⁰⁸ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴⁰⁹ Robert Murray, *The Illustrated Salem Guide Book...beyond the Witch City* (Salem: Robert Murray and Racket Shreve, 1975), 19.

⁴¹⁰ Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1979), 6. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1975), 6. Henry C. Nichols, *Be-witched in Historic Salem* (Salem: Deschamps Printing, 1967), 6.

⁴¹¹ “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1982), 28. Also “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1988), 9, 32; “Witchcraft,” *Best of Salem: A Guide to Dining, Shopping, and Historic Attractions* (Salem: 1984), 22;

⁴¹² David Goss, “Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692,” *Salem, Massachusetts: Alive With History* 1990-1991, 23.

resulted in the deaths of 23 persons.”⁴¹³ These touristic treatments figured a woman of color as the root of disorder with her intrusion of a Black or Native presence and cultural practices into a whitewashed Puritan New England, despite the fact that acts of magic attributed to her in 1692 documentation fell within the Anglo-American tradition. Locating the origin of the superstitions that catalyzed the witch trials with a woman of color allowed travel guides to frame it as an import to New England rather than an entrenched component of Anglo-American culture. This shifted the cultural taint of belief in magic and superstition towards people of color, positioning them as internal threats to white society and fundamentally unsuited to exercising public influence.

The Witch Museum was one of the few instances in Salem tourism that acknowledged that Tituba was also a victim of the witch trials whose race likely contributed to the accusations against her. A brochure for the museum in 1987 as well as the interpretation stated clearly that she was “innocent,” and that she used her tricks to entertain the girls rather than terrify them. She and the other accused witches were merely scapegoats.⁴¹⁴ The Witch Museum’s narration notes that it was likely not an accident that Salemites first accused a Black woman of witchcraft, given that they commonly referred to Satan as a “Black man.”⁴¹⁵ However, in trying to render Tituba more sympathetic, they also stripped her of any sort of intelligence or real agency. She was described as “old, poor” Tituba, incapable of understanding the proceedings against her or the potential implications of her confession. The Witch Museum’s Tituba is sympathetic because she

⁴¹³ Danvers Historical Commission, “Salem Village Parsonage,” Historic Marker, 1974.

⁴¹⁴ “The Witch Museum 1692,” Brochure, Salem Witch Museum, 1987.

⁴¹⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

is shown as intensely servile and ultimately taken advantage of by the white women and girls she served. Thus, Tituba was shown as being the source of the witch hysteria but out of haplessness rather than calculation. By contrast, George Burroughs and John Proctor are identified as “heroes” whose bravery, good sense, and outspokenness serve as an example of moral courage and active resistance to injustice.⁴¹⁶ The Witch Museum naturalized white supremacy not by vilifying Tituba outright, but by suggesting that she was too simple and superstitious to act rationally or exert any sort of agency in the proceedings against her. While a Black woman inadvertently sparked a witch hunt, white men led the way back to order and rationality through their own examples. This narrative still locates horror, backwardness, and a dark chapter of history in a Black woman and naturalizes white supremacy by suggesting that this is because white men are best suited to wield power and exercise judgment.

At the same time that a Black woman is put front and center in interpretation of New England history to shift blame from male patriarchs, she is also shown as alien to New England, and Black people in general are alienated from the landscape. She appears as an aberration rather than as part of a network of slavery throughout the region. Interpretation of Tituba ends with her figure huddled in her jail cell, with no mention made of her ultimate fate. In this way, she disappears from the narrative and from New England at the end, restoring Massachusetts as a fundamentally and necessarily white space. Not only are people of color physically removed from New England, but they are culturally alienated as well. For instance, nothing about voodoo makes it particularly

⁴¹⁶ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

associated with the Devil or inherently threatening – it appeared sinister to white audiences because of misunderstandings of a spiritual practice associated with exoticized Black communities.⁴¹⁷ In this way, Blackness itself is otherized, physically and culturally alienated from New England.

The Witch Museum uses Native Americans as a framing device for their interpretation of 1692, casting them as frightening figures on the fringes of a white New England community rather than defenders of their own sovereignty from colonial depredations. The Witch Museum opens its tour with narration explaining the anxieties that permeated Massachusetts in the winter of 1691-1692. They list Native Americans, smallpox, precarious winter food supplies, and wolves as evidence of “Satanic evil” in a way that otherizes the past and establishes horror rather than inviting understanding for seventeenth-century mentalities. In doing so, they rhetorically equate indigenous persons with animals and the devil as a danger haunting New England. In the opening voiceover, visitors learn that Salemites accepted the Devil as reality, and that they felt his presence in their lives through the sounds of wolves abroad while they “lived in dread of the Indians.”⁴¹⁸ Positioning Native Americans alongside superstition and eradicated diseases implies that they are of another mysterious age. Interpretation ends on a triumphalist note in which chastened white Salemites leave superstition and the “climate of fear” exemplified by Native Americans behind at the close of the witch trials as a new, more

⁴¹⁷ John P. Bartkowski, “Claims-Making and Typifications of Voodoo as Deviant Religion: Hex, Lies, and Videotape,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (December 1998), 559-579 and Carolyn Morrow Long, “Perceptions of New Orleans Voodoo: Sin, Fraud, Entertainment, and Religion,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 6 (October 2002), 86-101.

⁴¹⁸ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

reasonable modern age begins. A Native presence in New England is thus rendered inherently dark and anachronistic, needing to be subdued by white people for civilization to advance and order to be restored. Narratively leaving Native Americans in a vanished colonial world perpetuates the myth of indigenous extinction and upholds racist notions about the necessity of Native removal for progress and the creation of a modern America.

1992 Memorial

The dedication of the Salem Witch Trials Memorial in 1992 affirmed the themes of injustice under the law, intolerance, and scapegoating as the defining narrative and moral lesson at the heart of the Salem Witch Trials. The words of the executed witches proclaiming their innocence are carved into the stone at the entrance to the memorial space, telling visitors that “God knows I am innocent,” “I do plead not guilty,” and “For my life now lies in your hands.”⁴¹⁹ They are deliberately obscured by the dirt and debris of the outdoor space and cut off by the low stone walls of the memorial space, representing the “social indifference” that met their protests, the courage of the victims in refusing to comply with unjust legal proceedings and implicate others, and the need for “tolerance and understanding” in the present.⁴²⁰ Low slabs of stone around the walls of the memorial, etched with the names of the executed witches and Giles Corey and the

⁴¹⁹ Salem Witch Memorial. Site visit. Salem, Massachusetts. September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴²⁰ “Memorial Dedication: Wednesday, August 5, 1992,” Brochure, Salem Tercentenary Committee, 1992.

dates of their deaths, stand in for their graves.⁴²¹ Aligning the Salem Witch Trials with the Holocaust, the tercentenary committee invited Elie Wiesel to formally dedicate the memorial. He did so with a speech condemning fanaticism, which he identified as what allowed the witch trials to take place. He stated: “I believe fanaticism is therefore the worst evil that existed then for it produced more evil. And fanaticism is the greatest evil that faces us today.”⁴²² Since the seventeenth century, this fanaticism expressed itself in identity-based violence, seen in the Holocaust or, most recently at the time of the dedication, the conflict between Bosnia and Serbia. To conclude his speech, he urged visitors to take away from the memorial “a lesson not about the past only, but also about the present. That whenever a person or a group of persons come and say that they are superior to another group because of their color, race or religion, they will create upheavals with bloodshed accompanying them.”⁴²³ In this way, the memorial stood as a universal reminder of the violence engendered through the identification of an “other” and through chauvinism. Critically, the repeated use of the word “fanaticism” strips the oppressive class of historical, ideological, political, or racial specificity. Its only characteristic is excess. This sense of abstracted fervor allows tourists to condemn the actions of 1692 without having to identify the structural elements that produced the particular contours of “fanatical” action – namely class tensions, religious faith,

⁴²¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; “Memorial Dedication: Wednesday, August 5, 1992,” brochure, Salem Tercentenary Committee, 1992; “Witch trial hysteria recalled,” *Salem Evening News* November 15, 1991, p. 1, 7.

⁴²² “Elie Wiesel’s Salem Witch Trials Memorial Dedication Speech, 1992,” Salem Witch Museum, <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/2017/07/20/elie-wiesels-salem-witch-trials-memorial-dedication-speech-1992/>

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

assumptions about gender, and colonial hierarchies that would be recognizable in twentieth-century American culture.

This abstraction of “tolerance” as a concept and praise of “diversity” without interrogation of systemic oppression was a hallmark of late-twentieth-century discourse as “multiculturalism became a central problematic of liberal democratic citizenship” and white Americans, Europeans, and Australians feared ethnic conflict domestically and abroad.⁴²⁴ As noted by Wendy Brown, “tolerance is uncritically promoted across a wide range of venues and for a wide range of purposes” with myriad, “sometimes incoherent” usages.⁴²⁵ Even without the direct force of law, tolerance discourse “produces and positions subjects, organizes meanings and practices of identity, marks bodies, and conditions political subjectivities” through its “dissemination” across institutions and events.⁴²⁶ American liberals deployed the term as a cure for problems ranging from racial segregation to terrorism, while conservatives argued that efforts to curtail hate-speech and discrimination constituted intolerance of their beliefs.⁴²⁷ Functionally, “tolerance” became not a force of “protection against violent persecution” but rather a “generalized language of antiprejudice” that “betokened a vision of the good society yet to come.”⁴²⁸ Its use reinforces structures of power; a dominant group grants another, undesirable group the right to exist without full access to their own position of privilege.⁴²⁹ In

⁴²⁴ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2.

⁴²⁵ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 2-3.

⁴²⁶ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 4.

⁴²⁷ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 2-3.

⁴²⁸ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 5.

⁴²⁹ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 24-25.

delimiting the intolerable and tolerable, “tolerance appears...as a mode of incorporating and regulating the presence of the threatening Other within.”⁴³⁰ Thus, tolerance functions as a “discourse of depoliticization” that occludes the specific historical and contemporary contours of conflict.⁴³¹

This message, that the Salem Witch Trials stand as a lesson in the need for vigilance to protect human rights and that the victims of the witch trials deserve to be remembered as “heroes” who died rather than turn against their beliefs or condemn other innocent people, underpinned the press, public programming, and exhibits associated with the tercentenary commemoration.⁴³² The malleability of “tolerance” as a concept allowed these events to address a variety of human rights crises in their programming. For instance, Salem State hosted a forum on human rights as part of the educational programming affiliated with the commemoration. The speakers addressed the students on topics ranging from the Holocaust, Native American removal, Japanese internment, and contemporary racism against African Americans.⁴³³ Centering identity-based violence in narratives in this way could provide a framework for addressing tragedies that can result from institutionalized inequality and cultural practices. However, the flexibility and universality of “intolerance” as the theme of 1692 precluded any precise definition of what made people “other” in 1692. One article in the *Boston Sunday Globe* covering the

⁴³⁰ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 27.

⁴³¹ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 109.

⁴³² “Miller celebrates triumph of spirit,” *Salem Evening News* November 15, 1991, p. 1, 7; Kathy McCabe, “3 centuries later, bells toll for Salem witch-trial ‘heroes,’” *The Boston Sunday Globe*, March 1, 1992, p. North 3.

⁴³³ “Witch trials: The politics of hate and fear,” *Salem Evening News* March 12, 1992, p. 9. Nelson K. Benton III, “No hucksterism in Tercentenary,” *The Salem Evening News* March 16, 1992, p. 4.

tercentennial events printed part of a quote from Peter Stine, chair of Gordon College's English Department noting that the initial three women accused were "on the fringes" of society, without noting why.⁴³⁴ In Wiesel's speech, he noted the "fanaticism" with which Puritans condemned their neighbors as witches, but did not mention what particularly made individuals suspect. This lack of historical specificity, allowing the victims of 1692 to appear simply as vilified witches with no serious engagement with what led to their deaths as such, allowed them to become general stand-ins for the "other," with meanings more easily imposed upon them. This might also allow tourists to view the memorial at a distance; if visitors do not identify themselves with Nazis, communist blacklisting, or witchcraft-believing Puritans, there seems little immediacy in the kind of identity-based violence at work in 1692.

In some ways, women are very present at the Witch Trials Memorial. They "speak," in a sense; their words spoken in their own defense are carved into the entrance of the memorial. Stone benches installed around the three walls of the memorial also function as individual graves, potentially inviting reflection and commemoration of their personhood. Overall, however, the tercentenary events seem to have paid limited attention to the role of gender and gendered violence in 1692 in the official programs. The fact that the majority of the victims were women, or that gender performance might have also led to men's identification as witches, receives little acknowledgment in discussions of the lessons of 1692 for intolerance. Indeed, in a series of "time capsules"

⁴³⁴ Kathy McCabe, "3 centuries later, bells toll for Salem witch-trial 'heroes,'" *The Boston Sunday Globe*, March 1, 1992, p. North, 3.

explaining the course of the Salem Witch Trials to readers, one or two paragraph snippets about the witch trials published in the *Salem Evening News* in conjunction with the Essex Institute over the course of a year leading up to the tercentenary, gender did not enter into their explanations. Even when explaining how “a history of problematic relationships” led to the accusations of particular individuals, how generations of biblical and popular lore led to widespread belief in “the witch” figure, what criteria courts used to identify a witch, how complicated social tensions left Salem unstable, the capsules never included any discussion of how gender might have entered into “problematic relationships” or religious understandings of who a witch was most likely to be.⁴³⁵ In the short biographies provided for Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, the newspapers described Good’s “gruff” reputation and Osborne’s marriage to her former servant and subsequent attempt to gain legal control over her late husband’s lands without invoking how closely related these factors in their accusations were to their gender, or indeed how this might relate to gender performance, social ostracism, and accusations of witchcraft for the other women in their capsules.⁴³⁶

It seems that if the events of the Salem Witch Trials offer a model for thinking of human rights in the tercentenary program, women’s rights and misogyny seem important for inclusion under these auspices. For instance, among the records of the Tercentenary Committee are clippings of newspaper coverage of Alan Dershowitz and Arthur Miller in conversation on the lessons of tolerance and the law from 1692.⁴³⁷ Also among these

⁴³⁵ “Capsule,” *Salem Evening News*, January 7, 1992-August 17, 1992.

⁴³⁶ “Capsule,” *Salem Evening News*, March 3, 1992; “Capsule,” *Salem Evening News*, March 4, 1992.

⁴³⁷ “Advocating Tolerance,” *Salem Evening News* June 18, 1992, n.p.

clippings, however, were Dershowitz's editorials condemning efforts by Stanford to curtail hate-speech against women and people of color as "crypto-fascist" attacks on speech by female and Black students trying to prohibit "expression that, by accepted community standards, degrade, victimize, stigmatize, or pejoratively characterize...on the basis of personal intellectual or cultural diversity."⁴³⁸ Given Dershowitz's characterization of these students' efforts to combat identity-based intolerance, it seems that the ways in which misogyny as a structural, all-encompassing feature of seventeenth-century culture contributed to the identification of particular individuals as witches might not have seemed a significant lesson of 1692 for modern Americans dealing with continued institutional sexism and gender-based violence. This undermines the work of the memorial message, as societies and individuals cannot meaningfully combat "intolerance" if it is thrown around as a general buzzword with little interrogation of what made the accused in 1692 "other." Visitors who might not see themselves in descriptions of genocide at the tercentennial events might recognize their own behavior in descriptions of colonial sexism directed at outspoken women or those who succeeded in men's roles, leading to their identification as witches.⁴³⁹ This lack of specificity in incorporating gender into identity-based violence in 1692 and its aftermath might point towards a cultural unwillingness to view women's experiences as a universal point of identification, or indeed as being relevant to men. The witches of 1692 can only attain the level of

⁴³⁸ Alan Dershowitz, "Today's leftist thought police make campus speech a crime," *Boston Herald* March 2, 1989, n.p.

⁴³⁹ For feminist readings of the Salem Witch Trials, see Reis, *Damned Women* and Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*.

cultural archetype when de-gendered as a group of “victims” rather than a group of mostly women.

As noted above, the tercentenary programs did explicitly condemn contemporary racism as a lesson in intolerance that Americans still need to learn from 1692. Despite this, coverage of Tituba around the commemoration events trafficked in racist tropes. For instance, tercentenary events involving Tituba echoed earlier varied representations of her ethnicity. In the “time capsule” snippets published over the course of 1992, the writers referred to her as a “Carib Indian slave,” while a play by Massachusetts’ playwright Wendy Lement and directed by a theater coordinator at Salem State College depicting Tituba’s relationship with the white girls under her care, “Tituba’s Tale,” portrayed her as Black.⁴⁴⁰ Evidently, Tituba’s most salient qualities were her racial and cultural “otherness.” Though not represented in the memorial, given that she was never executed, she did appear in narratives of 1692 in press and public programming. If the moral lesson of the memorial and of 1692 generally was supposed to be about the violence engendered by racism and intolerance, talking about treatments of people of color under the law and American culture and drawing thoughtful connections between Tituba’s treatment in 1692 and subsequent representations of her seems as if it ought to have been central to the memory work done by the 1992 commemorative events.

Instead, Tituba’s depictions repeated stereotypical constructions of her, including locating her scary stories as the beginning of the witch trials. In one travel guide to

⁴⁴⁰ “Capsule,” *Salem Evening News*, January 14, 1992. “Tituba’s Tale,” Brochure, Salem State Special Collections, Salem Tercentenary Committee, 1992. Alexander Stevens, “A restrained look at Salem’s witch trials,” *North Shore Sunday* October 27, 1991.

Salem's witchcraft attractions and the tercentenary, for instance, the author wrote that the witch trials began with a group of young girls gathering in Reverend Parris' home to hear his "West Indian slave, Tituba, spin demonic tales by the fireside."⁴⁴¹ In the *Salem Evening News* capsules, the January 13th capsule noted that "there are a number of theories as to Tituba's role in the events of 1692. Some say she instigated the witch trials...others suggest she was blamed because, as a West Indian slave, she was different from the rest of the community."⁴⁴² Not only does this snippet fail to name the colonialism that informed her difference from the rest of the community, it positions her scapegoating as the instigator of the witch trials as an equally valid historical theory. Even the suggestion that she might have been treated unfairly as an enslaved woman gets undermined by the following days' capsules'. Here, readers learn that she was often responsible for the first afflicted children out of their parents' view, and that she was indeed "no ordinary slave, for she had been reared in Barbados, where voodoo and mystical incantation were part of the culture of her people."⁴⁴³ Their meetings, "Tituba's circle," or "Tituba's meetings," soon grew to "initiate" other girls from the neighborhood.⁴⁴⁴ The brochure for "Tituba's Tale" also placed her in the center of a group of white girls in "her kitchen" to hear their fortunes.⁴⁴⁵ Earlier, unpublished drafts of descriptions of the play included a line about how "her voodoo led her to becoming the

⁴⁴¹ Richard P. Carpenter, "Salem plays up witch history," *Boston Sunday Globe* May 10, 1992, B30.

⁴⁴² "Capsule," *Salem Evening News*, January 13, 1992

⁴⁴³ "Capsule," *Salem Evening News*, January 14, 1992

⁴⁴⁴ "Capsule," *Salem Evening News*, January 15, 1992; "Capsule," *Salem Evening News*, January 20, 1992

⁴⁴⁵ "Tituba's Tale," Brochure, Salem Tercentenary Committee, Salem State Special Collections, 1992

first accused.”⁴⁴⁶ This phrasing implies that Tituba somehow brought about her own accusation and eventual prosecution, instead of being just as much a victim of the witch hysteria as anybody white accused of witchcraft, neatly eliding the role of New England colonialism and slavery in her treatment during the trials. Further, these figurations of Tituba’s role in instigating the witch trials through magical rites and stories and the control of the white residents implied by the possessive in “Tituba’s circle” reinforce the preceding century’s scapegoating of her for starting the witch trials and belie the extreme pressures placed upon her as a non-white enslaved woman in courts. Singling her out to such a degree for confessing to witchcraft, considering how many other white New Englanders did so also, also positioned her as peculiarly culpable and morally corrupt for not refusing to comply with the trials.

The tercentenary programming furthered this gap between Tituba’s treatment and the rest of the overall messaging. In contrast to an overall narrative centered on the innocence of the victims of 1692 and assertions that there were no witches in Salem, marketing for events involving Tituba often suggested that she might have actually been a witch or otherwise involved in the supernatural. The brochure for “Tituba’s Tale,” for instance, asked “Did Tituba bring magic with her from the island of Barbados? What spell could she have cast on the young girls of Salem? Was she a witch?...or was she victim?”⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, the newspaper capsules asserted that she might have taught the afflicted girls “magical rites from her native land” and that she was “versed in the

⁴⁴⁶ “Tituba’s Tale,” Unpublished brochure draft, Salem Tercentenary Committee, Salem State Special Collections, 1992.

⁴⁴⁷ “Tituba’s Tale,” Brochure, Salem Tercentenary Committee, Salem State Special Collections, 1992.

customs of voodoo and black magic which were part of her native culture.”⁴⁴⁸ First, as noted above, this association with voodoo and “black arts” is only sinister to white audience because of racist constructions of Black people and Black spirituality. Secondly, this allowed visitors and boosters to commodify her victimization and play with the suggestion that she might actually be a frightening supernatural figure to, in the words of one article about the play make a “suitable, spooky kickoff” to 1992’s Haunted Happenings.⁴⁴⁹ The Haunted Happenings events, every October in Salem, are among the most overtly commercialized events in the city’s tourism industry, and they create the most slippage between Hollywood monsters, the supernatural, Wicca, and history. Selecting Tituba as a historical individual who could be similarly commercialized alongside ghosts or the Bride of Frankenstein for a fun fright furthered her dehumanization and her relative lack of historical personhood compared to white women involved in 1692. The director of “Tituba’s Tale” confessed to a journalist that he “felt a pull between an authentic portrayal of Tituba and her life” and a narrative “suitable” for Halloween entertainment.⁴⁵⁰ Evidently Tituba retained more interpretive capital as a racist caricature for the entertainment of primarily white audiences than she did as an autonomous human being. This continuation of Tituba’s otherizing, her scapegoating for the witch trials, and the imposition of racist tropes trafficked in the kind of cultural violence the memorial and interpretation ostensibly combatted while reserving the language of victimization for whiteness.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ “Capsule,” *Salem Evening News*, January 14, 1992; “Capsule,” *Salem Evening News*, March 2, 1992.

⁴⁴⁹ Alexander Stevens, “A restrained look at Salem’s witch trials,” *North Shore Sunday* October 27, 1991.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ For tensions between supernatural tourism, slavery, and racism in the South, see Miles, *Tales*.

The dedication of the Salem Witch Trials Memorial inaugurated the “Salem Award,” which recognized an individual who exemplified the lessons of 1692 through resistance to injustice.⁴⁵² Gregory Allen King, a Black man who saved the life of a Japanese-American man from assault, received the first award, praised by the *Salem Evening News* as someone who “typifie[d] the courage those early settlers of the Salem area displayed...to rescue a fellow human being threatened by the modern-day hysteria that raged for several days in South Central Los Angeles.”⁴⁵³ Linda C. McConchie, the executive director of the tercentenary committee, commented that watching the riots, she felt there was no “honor and courage and wisdom...in our interactions with each other.”⁴⁵⁴ The dedication brochure statement similarly praised Allen for his actions, which “helped to restore a sense of hope and social conscience in a time of crisis...[his] courage helps us to understand the personal choices we can make within the context of social responsibility.”⁴⁵⁵ This framing of the L.A. Riots minimized the fact that the injustices in question were white supremacist state violence and institutional racism, and by extension elides any call to action to redress the “intolerance” that led police officers to assault Rodney King. This parallels the Dershowitz right-wing critique of hate speech as the most significant form of “intolerance” facing the nation. Instead of placing the burden for dismantling white supremacy and overcoming the violence enabled by it on

⁴⁵² “Salem Award press release,” Salem Tercentenary Committee, Salem State University Special Collections; “The Salem Award,” Voices Against Injustice, <https://voicesagainstinjustice.org/salem-award/>

⁴⁵³ Nelson K. Benton III, “L.A. riot hero fitting recipient of Salem Award,” *Salem Evening News* July 14, 1992.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ “Memorial Dedication: Wednesday, August 5, 1992,” brochure, Salem Tercentenary Committee, 1992.

white people, this kind of language requires Black people to embody forgiveness and tolerance towards their oppressors.

The tercentenary commemorations' simultaneous praise of resisting racism while propagating racist, erroneous narratives about Tituba for the entertainment of mostly white tourists, and failure to engage white supremacy at the conferring of a humanitarian award for resisting injustice during the L.A. riots points to ambivalences around white privilege and white responsibility in the face of racism. Participants in the tercentenary events recognized "tolerance" as a cultural value, but seemingly prioritized a fear of losing privilege or recognizing themselves among the "intolerant." To that end, constructions of Tituba's role in the witch trials centered white powerlessness and victimization, by extension framing narratives of white patriarchal domination and violence as actually being the result of aggressive Blackness. They also ignored or failed to acknowledge white patriarchy as a system based on oppression and violence, choosing instead to mention race in ways that made people feel good for being aware of "injustice."

Conclusion

Salem witchcraft tourism at the end of the twentieth century contained the disruptions of the civil rights and feminist movements by acknowledging misogyny and racism to a degree but locating them in the past as part of a particularly Puritan society. Tourists could also take comfort in seeing themselves as better than their historical counterparts through the creation false notions of racial progress and triumphalism,

locating real issues of inequality in the past. It also distanced white patriarchy from problems of 1692 by shifting blame to young girls and a Black woman, reassuring tourists that white patriarchy is necessary to contain the chaos and illegitimate power they represented. While some interpretations, particularly at the Salem Witch Museum, nodded towards issues of persecution, intolerance, scapegoating in the 50s, 60s, 70s, overall witchcraft tourism put white people at the center of that narrative. Interpretation centered the innocence of white victims and morally distinguished the lone woman of color as particularly culpable for instigating the witch trials. It commercialized her life and her body for fun thrills for white audiences, ultimately figuring Black and Native bodies as still at the disposal of white audiences. Tituba's foreign origins and otherized cultural practices allowed interpretations to alienate her, and by extension issues of colonialism, slavery, and New England's non-white population, from New England identity and construct the region as white. Instead of giving colonialism, gender, and class historically specific contours that might be interrogated and deployed as a means of discussing the dismantling of these inequalities in modern America, witchcraft tourism deployed an apolitical language of "tolerance" and a tourist script that centered white middle-class men as the victims of 1692, brought down by unruly girls and a woman of color. "Tolerance" in this usage gives the illusion that acknowledging the existence of "prejudice" is progressive work, thereby undermining the urgency of anti-racist, anti-colonial feminist activism. This formulation also marks off girls, Black women, and Native women as Others in need of containment, not true incorporation, into systems of power.

Chapter Three

Fun and Informative: Education and Entertainment in Witchcraft Attractions

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, products of popular culture such as *Bewitched*, historical interpretation for tourists, and commemorative events like the 1992 Tercentenary created a narrative of the Salem Witch Trials in which a group of unruly girls and a woman of color instigated a witchcraft panic and co-opted the justice system. White men typically anchor these narratives, constructed as emblems of reason and moral fortitude amidst social chaos. Twenty-first century attractions build their interpretations in response to this core understanding of the witch trials. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, non-profit attractions such as the Essex Heritage programming or historic properties like the Rebecca Nurse Homestead typically craft interpretation that seeks to contextualize, challenge, and complicate this reading of the trials. For-profit attractions, by contrast, capitalize on visitors' desire to learn about history and enjoy their leisure time by emphasizing how thrilling their educational experiences are. Frequently, these sites blend a history museum script with an atmosphere evocative of a dungeon or thrill ride attraction. Drawing upon the heightened affect of a dungeon attraction to build empathy among majority-white visitors with historical actors distanced by time and, often, marginalized identities could be an effective interpretive strategy. In practice, however, sensationalist elements create a reductive narrative of 1692 that, given the ways in which these sites are read as educational authorities, reproduces

racist and misogynistic stereotypes as historically accurate realities. At the same time, selecting particular elements of the Salem story sites marketed as an *entertaining* educational experience reinforces the relative disposability of the bodies of women, particularly women of color, for the amusement of primarily white Americans. In addition, interpretation and souvenirs involving “the witch” as archetype typically reserve positive reclaimings for white women, furthering the marginalization of women of color and non-Anglo-American spiritual practices as suspect. Edutainment attractions might not be equipped to interrogate settler colonialism, but given that they interpret the lives and deaths of real individuals, they do have an obligation to not inflict harm on marginalized communities at a bare minimum.

According to a 2013 survey by the National Park Service of visitors to the Salem Maritime National Historic Site and city of Salem, 93 percent of visitors identified as white.⁴⁵⁶ 89 percent of visitors came from the Continental United States and Puerto Rico, and approximately 49 percent were between the ages of 31 and 60, 19 percent below the age of 15 and 17 percent older than 61.⁴⁵⁷ 80 percent of visitors arrived in family groups. 76 percent of survey respondents reported having completed a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 67 percent reported an income between \$50,000 and \$199,999.⁴⁵⁸ Thus,

⁴⁵⁶ “New Report Provides Valuable Insight on Tourism and Visitors to Salem,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/sama/learn/news/new-report-provides-valuable-insight-on-tourism-and-visitors-to-salem.htm>

⁴⁵⁷ “New Report Provides Valuable Insight on Tourism and Visitors to Salem,” <https://www.nps.gov/sama/learn/news/new-report-provides-valuable-insight-on-tourism-and-visitors-to-salem.htm>

⁴⁵⁸ Marc F. Manni and Yen Lee, “Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Study,” *National Park Service* (2014), v.

“tourists” might be understood broadly as white, middle-class family groups from the United States.

The city’s official tourism board, Destination Salem, reported in a 2014 study that witchcraft is the biggest draw for travelers, and the Salem Witch Museum was the city’s most attended attraction, drawing in at least 300,000 visitors that year.⁴⁵⁹ To satisfy their interest in the Salem Witch Trials, tourists can visit a combination of non-profit sites, discussed in the next chapter, or for-profit museum attractions, including the Witch History Museum, the Witch Dungeon, the Salem Wax Museum, or the Salem Witch Village in addition to the Salem Witch Museum. These sites market themselves as sites of encounter with witches, ghosts, and zealous Puritans while also purporting to educate visitors about the 1692 crisis or witchcraft more broadly. These venues employ a blend of interpretive panels, docent-led tours, recorded audio, and tableaux depicting scenes and people to walk visitors through a historical narrative and allow them to come face to face with accused witches and the overzealous judges who hanged them. Each site offers a core narrative of witch hunts and historical beliefs in magic. Here, museum marketing insists, learning is not only fun but thrilling.

The Attractions

Although their core narratives vary, these sites employ similar visual and narrative devices that dwell on the sensational and make a spectacle of the Salem Witch Trials. For instance, many sites highlight Tituba’s alleged importation of voodoo to

⁴⁵⁹ Tom Dalton, “What’s drawing the most visitors?” *The Salem News* March 7, 2014, accessed online.

whitewashed colonial spaces, depict the pressing of Giles Corey, describe horrific prison conditions at length, and focus in on the most shocking accusations of witchcraft against people like the child Dorcas Good, the pregnant Elizabeth Proctor, or ministers like George Burroughs. The interpretation often reduces historical actors to stereotypes of Puritanical zealotry, mystical people of color, or hysterical teenagers. This creates a narrative of historical triumphalism, moving from a fun, spooky characterization of colonial America to a more enlightened age at the close of the hysteria that modern, rational people in the present continue to enjoy. Although these attractions often encourage visitors to commemorate the victims of 1692 and remain vigilant against superstition, injustice, and scapegoating in the present, the rhetorical distancing of the tourist and historical subjects diminishes the immediacy of this messaging. However, as will be discussed more below, it seems that interpreters could re-frame their stories of a community in crisis to center the ways in which Essex County turned on its most vulnerable in a moment of crisis and highlight the ways in which institutional failures disproportionately harmed women, the poor, and the enslaved instead of highlighting the victimization of white men of the middling sort at the hands of children and women of color.

This chapter will focus on a few for-profit museum attractions that blend historical interpretation with elements of spectacle and entertainment. It will make some mention of the Salem Witch Trials primary exhibit on 1692 described in Chapter Two, It will also include its *Witches: Evolving Perceptions* exhibit, which blends docent commentary, audio recordings, and interpretive elements like timelines of witch hunts to

trace the evolution of “the witch” as a cultural figure. At the conclusion of the first exhibit presentation, the lights come up, and a docent walks visitors through the gift shop to a second exhibition space. Unlike the first exhibit with its darkened lighting, sinister sound effects, and figures like the enormous devil figure, the *Evolving Perceptions* exhibit is bright and designed to give visitors a positive view of the “witch” as an archetypal figure, tracing her cultural usage from pre-Christian Europe through the early modern witch trials to contemporary Wicca and as a linguistic shorthand for scapegoating in cases like the Communist “witch hunts” of the 1950s. Small tableaux depict a pre-Christian European healer, the Wicked Witch of the West, and a Wiccan couple and are accompanied by short clips of pre-recorded narration supplemented by the docent. The guide establishes that the meaning of the word “witch” has changed over time, influenced by media representations from early modern artwork to film and fairy tales. The script for this portion of the tour remained standard across site visits in 2016, 2018, and 2019.

Beginning with the pre-Christian healer, visitors learn that in ancient Europe, matrilineal generations of “wise women” worshipped an Earth goddess and were venerated by their neighbors for their knowledge of healing. By the Middle Ages, clergy turned on these women and portrayed them as witches. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, periods of religious instability, climate disruptions, and famine contributed to an atmosphere in which Europeans sought to blame their problems on a “scapegoat,” in this case witches. Popular culture took up the figure of the witch as an emblem of evil in productions such as Shakespeare and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Modern Wiccans, illustrated by a tableau showing a couple in their ceremonial robes,

practice a peaceful religion organized around the turning of the seasons and a god and goddess, reflecting the equal importance placed on men and women in Wicca. A timeline of world history overlaid with developments in the history of witchcraft line one wall. Another wall at the end of the exhibit is emblazoned with a graphic showing a formula for a witch hunt, namely, “fear + trigger = scapegoat,” with examples given as communists, McCarthy, and blacklisting or Japan, Pearl Harbor, and Japanese Americans. Visitors are encouraged to fill out comment cards naming their own examples of historical scapegoating. This tour does show that conceptions of historical witches, stock characters in film and folklore, and modern Wiccans are distinct but often conflated categories in popular usage, frequently in ways that marginalize women. Critically, however, the interpretation does not offer the same contextualization for the belief systems of African and indigenous cultures that are associated with fright and diabolic witchcraft and referenced in the museum’s own opening exhibit.⁴⁶⁰

The *Witches: Evolving Perceptions* and Witch Village exhibit below collapse the histories of paganism, witchcraft, and medieval folk practice. As discussed in Chapter Two, historians in the 1980s disproved notions that religious and legal authorities targeted midwives in early modern Anglo-Scottish witch hunts.⁴⁶¹ Further, while elements of pre-Christian spirituality survived in medieval and early modern folklore – for instance in charms to encourage crop fertility or aid in healing, often invoking prayer in the place of pre-Christian powers – the people who used these rites incorporated them

⁴⁶⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴⁶¹ Harley, “Historians as Demonologists,” 1-26 and Larner, *Enemies of God*, 101.

into Catholic, Anglican, or Puritan practice and understood themselves as Christians not “pagans.” Men as well as women utilized these superstitions.⁴⁶² Civil and religious authorities in the medieval and early modern periods varied by the individual, but in general, while they might have scolded parishioners, they tended to treat sympathetic magic (magical acts of correspondence, for instance, placing a child on an oven to cure a fever), and rites for healing, agriculture, and divination, as petty offenses.⁴⁶³ Thus, treatments of medieval witchcraft at the Witch Museum and Witch Village seem to owe more to Wiccans’ interpretations of witchcraft history than the historical record.

Margaret Murray, a British Egyptologist and folklorist, popularized a theory among the general public that a pre-Christian religion survived into the early modern period, practiced in secret by a vast network of pagans who met in covens. In the seventeenth century, according to Murray, Christian authorities gained enough power over European populations to instigate witch hunts meant to extirpate their pagan rivals for influence.⁴⁶⁴ When Wicca and other neo-pagan movements emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, foundational figures like Gerald Gardner reinvigorated these notions of pre-Christian religious survival. Gardner in particular originated his Wicca movement by

⁴⁶² For intersections of Puritanism and folklore, see Hall, *Worlds of Wonder* and Richard Godbeer, *The Devil’s Dominion*. For medieval treatments of religion and magic, see Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Eugene D. Dukes, *Magic and Witchcraft in the Dark Ages* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995); Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1996); Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Michael Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ See Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921).

claiming that he discovered a coven of witches who had continued their traditions in secret for thousands of years under the noses of Christianity.⁴⁶⁵

The Witch History Museum focuses tightly on the Salem Witch Trials. Visitors purchase a ticket in the gift shop and are left to peruse the merchandise or enter an exhibit space. Pews face a tableau of a colonial house facing a group of Native American men crouching and yelling in some bushes. Displays line the walls with images of witchcraft-related sites and interpretive panels explaining their significance. For instance, one display shows a photograph of a site identified as Gallows Hill above a panel explaining that nineteen people were hanged as witches, and that present-day Danvers, Peabody, and Salem had all been “Salem” in 1692 before splitting into their present iterations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Eventually, visitors are asked to take their seats and a tour guide in colonial costume steps up to the house at the front of the exhibit space to explain the historical context for the Salem Witch Trials. They learn that by 1692, Salem had been destabilized by disease, famine, Puritans’ emphasis on conformity, and wars with Native Americans in Maine. Reverend Samuel Parris moved into this community and further destabilized it by putting intense religious pressure on his congregation. When the children of his household began to show strange symptoms, which spread to other girls in the Village, Parris called in a physician, Dr. Griggs, who diagnosed witchcraft.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ Hugh B. Urban, *New Age, Neopagan, and New Religious Movements: Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 158-160.

⁴⁶⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

At this point, the docent guides downstairs through a series of tableaux depicting scenes from the witch trials, mixing recorded audio delivered in a sinister tone with supplementary information from the guide. The lighting is dark, and the recorded audio segments embellish the historical interpretation with sound effects like screaming, crashing thunder, and rattling chains. The tour opens with a scene depicting girls dancing around in the woods. The audio recounts how the girls of the Village claimed that a coven met in the woods, but the guide corrects this interpretation, stating that they actually met in secret in the Parris household to learn voodoo and witchcraft from Tituba and her husband whenever the Reverend was out of the home, represented by mannequins of white girls surrounding a seated Tituba in the Parris' kitchen, with John Indian posed behind her. As noted in the last chapter, there is no evidence for such meetings having taken place in the historical record. The voodoo so frightened the littlest children that they began to have nightmares, diagnosed as bewitchment. Parris beat Tituba into a confession of witchcraft, and she went on with the afflicted children to accuse many more women. More mannequins depict the girls in the throes of their hysterics or catatonic in bed, examined by the doctor. In another scene, Salem's Sheriff, George Corwin, takes the accused away to jail while the afflicted children are paraded from town to town pointing out other alleged witches for boredom and attention. Adults, according to the tour, accused neighbors in order to acquire their property. The museum next relates the arrest of George Burroughs, a former Salem minister residing in Maine who was accused of being the leader of Salem's coven. A tableau depicts Corwin's men dragging him out of his home in chains. A courthouse scene shows the trial of Candy, an

enslaved Black woman accused alongside her white mistress of harming neighbors through the use of a poppet, which was a doll that could be manipulated to inflict harm on the person it represented. Judge Jonathan Hathorne released Candy but not the white woman.⁴⁶⁷

The court actually examined two enslaved African women, Candy and Mary Black, in 1692, as discussed by Benjamin Ray. Magistrates examined them both in court, pressing them into implicating themselves and others as witches, but never formally indicted them. Nathaniel Putnam, a highly respected elder and influential leader in Salem Village, enslaved Mary Black. He was also a vocal critic of the witch trials, likely to the aggravation of his nephew Thomas Putnam, one of the most active proponents of the trials, who may have filed accusations against Mary Black in retaliation against his uncle. Ray speculates that Nathaniel Putnam's stature in his community protected Mary from formally going to trial. Candy, meanwhile, was an enslaved African woman brought from Barbados to New England by Margaret Hawkes. Thomas Putnam accused Candy of witchcraft, a charge which she confessed to. However, she also claimed that she had never been a witch in her own country or in Barbados, but rather, Hawkes had forced her to become one by compelling her to sign the Devil's Book, covenanting herself to Satan in exchange for magical power. The two used a poppet to torment the afflicted girls, Candy claimed, and when she produced this poppet for the court and manipulated it, the children shrieked and reacted to the actions performed on the doll. Despite this, the magistrates did not bring Candy before the grand jury. Ray posits that her status as an

⁴⁶⁷ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

enslaved African woman might have made her vulnerable to witchcraft accusations to begin with, but it also discredited her claims against her white mistress and might have made the pursuit of further legal action against Candy of little urgency.⁴⁶⁸

The narration also introduces Bridget Bishop, the first person to be accused of witchcraft in Salem. Bishop was poor, married multiple times, and troublesome, known for stealing, fighting, and arrests for domestic violence alongside her husband. She had also been charged with witchcraft and acquitted years before in 1679. Her neighbors testified that she could summon familiars, and that laborers hired to conduct repairs on her home had discovered poppets hidden in the walls.⁴⁶⁹ However, the museum interpretation focuses not on Bishop herself but on the introduction of spectral evidence, namely, charges that the spirit of an accused witch inflicted harm, and her demonic familiars which appeared in the shape of an animal.⁴⁷⁰ Both could be sent by a witch to torment another and could only be seen by the victim.⁴⁷¹

Visitors are led past another scene depicting a man standing in the woods while a green creature resembling Max Schreck's Nosferatu (1922) emerges from the ground before him to a recreation of an execution on Gallows Hill where they hear a description of George Burroughs' execution. The narration repeats a story of Burroughs nearly absolving himself by reciting the Lord's Prayer and convincingly speaking to his own innocence before Cotton Mather reassured the crowd that the Devil could appear innocent. A tableau shows Mather measuring and conducting experiments on Burrough's

⁴⁶⁸ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 197-205.

⁴⁶⁹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 28.

⁴⁷⁰ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 19

⁴⁷¹ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

skinned skull. Other victims, tourists learn, had their bodies thrown into a pit (depicted in a tableau as a pile of bones), although family members and the wealthiest man in Salem, Philip English, who had fled witchcraft charges himself, had them reburied respectfully after the conclusion of the trials. The tour recounts how English and his wife, both Episcopalian, had been outsiders and accused witches. Because of their money, they could afford to stage an escape to New York to wait out the Salem Witch Trials. In the interim, Sheriff George Corwin, a relative of one of the judges, lived in his home and had seized his wealth. According to the narration, after Corwin died young, English took Corwin's corpse ransom until his property could be returned to him. The tour concludes on a graveyard scene and the ghostly presence of Giles Corey while the narration recounts the story of his being pressed to death and returning as an omen of ill-fortune for Salem.⁴⁷²

The context for the Salem Witch Trials provided at the start of the Witch History Museum's tours accords with scholarship. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, for instance, locate the origins of the Salem Witch Trials in years of growing economic and religious factionalism in Salem Town and Salem Village.⁴⁷³ Mary Beth Norton "contends that the witchcraft crisis of 1692 can be comprehended only in the context of nearly two decades of armed conflict between English settlers and the New England Indians in both southern and norther portions of the region. The ongoing frontier war, and the multiple fears it generated," particularly as refugees from Maine returned to Essex County,

⁴⁷² Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁴⁷³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*.

including a number of accusers and accused, made Salem's witchcraft crisis so catastrophic.⁴⁷⁴ However, as noted previously, characterizations of Tituba as a voodoo-practicing instigator of the witch trials and source of the initial cases of bewitchment has no basis in the historical record, nor do claims that the afflicted children held secret magical rites in the woods of Salem.⁴⁷⁵ Other interpretive elements – like failures to explain how George Burroughs attracted suspicions of witchcraft – drastically simplify the Salem Witch Trials and risk distorting them into a moment in which a handful of individuals victimized more elite victims like Burroughs or the wealthy merchant Philip English although individuals across the colonial social spectrum faced witchcraft accusations.⁴⁷⁶ Men also seem to be overrepresented in the museum's interpretation. While John Proctor, George Burroughs, and Philip English did face witchcraft accusations (as did their wives, in the case of John Proctor and Philip English), women comprised the majority of the people executed and three-fourths of the accused. Most of the men denounced as witches attracted suspicion because a female relative had already been implicated.⁴⁷⁷

Scholarship also does not bear out the Witch Museum's docents' statements that accusers could implicate someone else to acquire their property.⁴⁷⁸ Historians Emerson Baker and Benjamin Ray point out that under Massachusetts' law, accusers would not gain possession of their victims' property.⁴⁷⁹ However, Ray contends that legally, George

⁴⁷⁴ See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

⁴⁷⁵ For instance, see Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 19-23.

⁴⁷⁶ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 44, 51.

⁴⁷⁷ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 127.

⁴⁷⁸ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 176.

⁴⁷⁹ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 175-176 and Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 141-142.

Corwin could not seize property in his capacity as Sheriff of Essex Country either, except in cases of treason, in which case the profits from the convicted criminal's property would revert to the crown, not the sheriff. He did, however, use his position to seize the personal property of accused witches like the Proctors and coerce payments from victims' families.⁴⁸⁰ Baker agrees that Corwin acted outside his legal remit in seizing the property of those who had not been convicted, like the Englishes, and that the property taken should have gone to the government. However, he also argues that because, as noted in the last chapter, Massachusetts' legal code was in the process of being rewritten, Governor Phips ordered the Court of Oyer and Terminer to act in accordance with English Common Law when dealing with witchcraft cases. In this case, England's witchcraft laws did allow the state to confiscate the convicted individual's personal property (but not their land).⁴⁸¹

The Witch Dungeon splits its interpretation between a short dramatic performance and a guided tour through a recreation of the Salem Gaol and tableaux of other Salem sites like the Parris parsonage or Gallows Hill. As at the Witch History Museum, visitors wander around a performance space, reading interpretive panels about the witch trials. They are called to their seats by a docent who gives background for the witch trials, recounting stories of famine, warfare, Puritans' oppression of young girls, and how the afflicted children fell into fits after frightening themselves with forbidden fortune telling tricks. Actresses perform courtroom scenes adapted from court transcripts, representing,

⁴⁸⁰ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 175-176.

⁴⁸¹ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 141-142.

for instance, the trials of Elizabeth Proctor or Sarah Good. At this point, the docent returns and leads visitors downstairs to a dimly-lit recreation of the Salem Gaol, scenes of corpses hanging from trees, Giles Corey's pressing, and the afflicted girls in the Parris home. Visitors learn that the Dungeon represents the colonial prison, which is no longer extant. Upon the construction of a new jail in the early nineteenth century, materials from the original jail were used to build a private residence on the spot. In the 1930s, the family who owned that house built an "Old Witch Jail and Dungeon" attraction for tourists and operated it on that site until the 1950s when the New England Telephone Company bought the property and destroyed the existing structures. The Dungeon attraction moved to its present location, a former church, and reopened in 1980, still under private ownership. Although the site and structures of the interpretive space are not original, docents and signage stress that the owners managed to acquire one of the original beams.⁴⁸² Guests can touch the beam if they wish, since, according to the docent, it brings good luck. When asked, even the docents seem uncertain as to why an object associated with the deaths and imprisonment of innocent people would bring good fortune to tourists.⁴⁸³ The particulars of this portion of the tour vary by docent and will be discussed in more detail below, but generally give a broad overview of how the Salem Witch Trials unfolded, beginning with Tituba and the afflicted children in the Parris household being to blame for the whole disaster. The focus of the tour, however, is on the conditions in prison. Visitors learn about how wealth determined one's experience of

⁴⁸² "Salem Jail in 1692, Site of," Salem Witch Museum, <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/salem-jail-in-1692-site-of/>

⁴⁸³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

incarceration, as prisoners had to pay for everything from their food to their shackles to the size of their cells. Prisoners experienced prolonged periods of darkness, physical pain from their cramped conditions, and flooding of the jail. Sheriff George Corwin and his men often tortured the prisoners. Visitors also learn about Giles Corey and Dorcas Good, the four-year-old daughter of Sarah Good, who also stood accused of witchcraft alongside her mother and was imprisoned with her.⁴⁸⁴ Scholarships support a grim characterization of prison conditions, including the use of physical brutality in treatments of prisoners.⁴⁸⁵ Across three visits to the Witch Dungeon, the content of the tours varied in scope and the level of complexity in historical interpretation.

The Witch Village offers a more general history of witchcraft as a docent leads tour groups past a series of tableaux with slightly low lighting of medieval torture, general Salem history, pagan magical practices, and Wicca. When the tour begins, the docent asks visitors to take a crystal for reasons revealed at the end of the tour. They take visitors to a scene representing the inquisition, depicting a man's torture on a rack device. They learn about how amidst plague, war, and a religious culture, inquisitors travelled from town to town seeking out witches. They tortured suspected witches into implicating themselves and others then burned the convicted. Next, the tour moves to a scene representing early Salem, which visitors learn Roger Conant founded in 1626 and developed into a prosperous port. Pirates frequented the city and, to ward them off, Salem began hanging the pirates and leaving their corpses on the pier as a warning to others.

⁴⁸⁴ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁴⁸⁵ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 33, 156 and Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 35, 123.

The tour moves ahead to 1692, represented by a scene of Giles Corey's death, describing the crushing effect of stones on the human body and the greed his neighbors displayed by accusing him to steal his land. There, the tour jumps back in time to a representation of a prehistoric shaman conducting an act of sympathetic magic – using symbolism to enact something in the real world – to ensure the success of a hunt. Another scene represents “pagan” women or local healers of the Middle Ages skilled in healing and sympathetic magic. Clergymen and doctors targeted these women with witchcraft accusations to eliminate them as rivals for medical revenue. Supposedly, associations between witches and the color green resulted from their hands being stained by chlorophyll from working in their gardens and came to be associated with brooms because of a ritual in which they jumped on broomsticks in order to encourage crop growth.

At this point, the tour switches to interpretation of Wicca, explaining that it is a very positive religion which does not include any sort of devil figure. Instead it is very earth-based and emphasizes doing good in the world because the consequences of an action will be rebounded upon the doer. Most of the negative associations with witches in modern culture have positive associations in Wicca, including the pentagram, which is a symbol of protection. At the conclusion of the tour, visitors face a dragon figure named Fluffy who, they are told, has also been the victim of a smear campaign by monotheistic religions. Visitors should leave the crystal they took at the beginning of the tour with Fluffy for good luck.⁴⁸⁶ As noted above, this characterization of medieval witchcraft collapses modern projections of Wicca and the use of magic in the Middle Ages. The

⁴⁸⁶ Salem Witch Village, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

guide on a site visit in 2018 was also inaccurate in her discussion of the Salem Witch Trials. For instance, when another tour participant asked whether Giles Corey was the only man executed as a witch, she confirmed that yes he was. In actuality, he was pressed to death without ever confessing or being convicted of witchcraft, and five men were hanged.⁴⁸⁷

Finally, the Salem Wax Museum, as its name implies, uses displays of wax figures and brief interpretive panels to illustrate an overall history of Salem, building from the darkness of the Salem Witch Trials to greatness in the maritime trade. When walking into the interpretive space, visitors first encounter a panel explaining Giles Corey's execution. The exhibit then opens its story of the witch trials with "Tituba, the Witch!" waiting outside a courtroom scene while figures representing the afflicted girls flail on the ground before an unidentified male figure, "launch[ing] the great delusion with hysterical scenes."⁴⁸⁸ Next, visitors see "Lusty Bridget Bishop," accused due to her "low reputation," under examination.⁴⁸⁹ Another tableau shows a pregnant Elizabeth Proctor kneeling in shackles in prison after being informed of her husband's execution. The panel explains how Elizabeth Proctor's pregnancy spared her long enough to survive the end of the witch trials. Visitors also see a hangman placing a noose around a woman about to be executed on Gallows Hill. The panel recounts how Sarah Wilde, about to be executed, cursed a Reverend Noyes (his role in the proceedings is unspecified) to choke to death on his own blood, which he did when he died later of an aneurism. The panel

⁴⁸⁷ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 34.

⁴⁸⁸ Salem Wax Museum, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁴⁸⁹ Salem Wax Museum, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

also informs visitors that they can visit the body of Judge Jonathan Hathorne in a nearby graveyard. The courts did not grant the witch victims a proper burial and instead dumped their bodies in shallow graves. Some families, like Rebecca Nurse's sons depicted retrieving their mother's body, stole their relatives' corpses back anyway for secret reburial. Finally, Governor William Phipps, depicted in his carriage in the final tableau, put an end to the "madness" when "the girls had gone too far" by accusing his wife and a Reverend Hale, one of the leaders of the witch persecution.⁴⁹⁰

Edutainment Sites and Genre Blending

Public history scholars have noted slippage between historical attractions as sites of recreation, commercialization, simplification, commemoration, and learning, referring to this phenomenon variously as "Disneyfication" (Brunel, 2006), "Mickey Mouse History" (Wallace, 1996), or as "history but better" in Richard Handler and Eric Gable's study of Colonial Williamsburg.⁴⁹¹ This chapter refers to Salem's for-profit museum attractions as "edutainment sites," in which the primary purpose of the experience is educational and the desire for that learning to be entertaining determines the delivery of the didactic content.⁴⁹² This echoes the language of the marketing for these attractions, which emphasizes that visitors will find an accurate learning experience presented in a

⁴⁹⁰ Salem Wax Museum, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁴⁹¹ Sylvie Brunel, *La planète disneylandisée: chronique d'un tour du monde* (Auxerre: Éditions Sciences Humaines, 2006), Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996; Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 42.

⁴⁹² See "From Museum to Amusement Park: The Opportunities and Risks of Edutainment," *International Journal of Arts Management* 16 (2014), 4-18.

thrilling and chilling package. For instance, the Witch Dungeon Museum's website promises visitors that they will find a "unique educational experience with a chill or two," while the Witch History Museum's assures "a historically accurate live presentation and tour downstairs, where you will walk thru [sic] the forest, meet Tituba in Rev. Parris' kitchen, visit Old Salem village and view 15 life size [sic] scenes depicting these stories."⁴⁹³ The Salem Witch Village and Salem Wax Museum have a joint web presence. Their landing page as of May 2020 touts how they provide "year-long entertainment" for their visitors beyond Haunted Happenings in October. By conveying historical interpretation with narrative flourishes and physical environments that draw upon the trappings of wax museums, dungeon attractions, and haunted houses, these sites create an entertainment experience through learning.

Educating visitors on the Salem Witch Trials and witchcraft more broadly seems central to the functioning of these attractions. They establish an expectation of learning through their promotional materials, and then the owners of the museum draw upon signals of informational authority to set an at least partly didactic tone meant to condition visitors to have a learning experience. As noted by John Urry and Jonas Larson in *The Tourist Gaze*, professionals and tourist boosters partially construct the visitors' gaze or mode of looking at the touristic object, be it a landscape, culture, or another person.⁴⁹⁴

"Gazing is a performance that orders, shapes, and classifies, rather than reflects the

⁴⁹³ "Witch Dungeon Museum," Witch Dungeon Museum, <http://www.witchdungeon.com/witchdungeon.html> and "Witch History Museum," Witch History Museum, <http://www.witchhistorymuseum.com/witchhistory.html>.

⁴⁹⁴ John Urry and Jonas Larson, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 1.

world."⁴⁹⁵ This gaze is "framed" by personal experiences, as well as things like images and textual representations that let tourists know that what they are looking at is "interesting" or "beautiful."⁴⁹⁶ As noted by Tony Bennett, museums also developed as part of a larger cultural effort to form a modern mode of representation that would order knowledge and, more importantly, order the public itself.⁴⁹⁷ Museums systematize the display of things to "embody and communicate specific cultural meanings and values" while also "regulating the conduct of visitors...in ways that are unobtrusive and self-perpetuating."⁴⁹⁸ The physical space of the museum and "organized walking" of a museum visit mold the body to particular modes of conduct.⁴⁹⁹ It also enforces self-regulating conduct through parallel processes that "order objects for public inspection" while also ordering public inspection through their physical configuration.⁵⁰⁰ The layouts and vantage points of museums and related sites ensure that visitors could be observed by one another, implicating the public in "spectacle and surveillance" that ultimately bolster social or state dominance through a "controlling vision." The museum blends the strategies of the panopticon ("rendering everything visible to the eye of power") with the panorama (a wide view of a totality).⁵⁰¹ Although Bennett refers to the development of modern museums in the nineteenth century and the institutionalization of the power of the state and white bourgeois influence, the structured walking and structured seeing

⁴⁹⁵ Urry and Larson, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2.

⁴⁹⁶ Urry and Larson, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2.

⁴⁹⁷ Tony Bennett. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-20.

⁴⁹⁸ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 1-8.

⁴⁹⁹ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 19-29.

⁵⁰⁰ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 59.

⁵⁰¹ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 66-68.

identified by scholars such as himself and John Urry work in Salem's edutainment attractions to create an atmosphere of educational authority. Additionally, Urry notes that tourists' identities such as race, gender, education, and socio-economic status shape the tourist gaze as well. In Salem, this means that those involved in the witch trials are viewed as subjects by white, educated, middle-class Americans.⁵⁰²

As noted above, these sites use their marketing to establish an expectation of learning before visitors enter the museum. Within the space of the museums themselves, the owners establish themselves as educational sites by structuring visitors' access to information and use of space and drawing upon visual signals of institutional expertise such as interpretive placards. The Wax Museum, Witch History Museum, Witch Dungeon, and Witch Museum, for instance, display wall panels at the entrances to their interpretive space elucidating the origins of the witch trials, information about individuals involved, the histories of particular sites like Gallows Hill, or why New Englanders hanged witches instead of burning them.⁵⁰³ Thus, the opening note of the museum experience is didactic. Docents establish themselves as authorities as well. They guide visitors through the space of the museum, play audio-recordings, and deliver historical information. Visitors enforce an expectation of learning as well by remaining quiet during the docents' presentation, not exploring the museum space until permitted to do so by the tour guide, shushing children and corralling them from wandering off, and asking

⁵⁰² Manni and Lee, "Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Study," *National Park Service* (2014), v.

⁵⁰³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

questions about the Salem Witch Trials or colonial New England when their guide indicates that they may do so.⁵⁰⁴ In this way, edutainment attractions in Salem place visitors at the receiving end of institutional authority through their visual language of museum placards, docent expertise, and soliciting questions about the historical content of the tour. Regardless of the intent of the managers or the varying degrees to which visitors absorb educational content, the visual, bodily, and auditory language of these sites establish at least the performance of an educational experience and the performance of learning on the part of the visitors.

Participant observation on site visits to these attractions in 2016, 2018, and 2019 as well as reviews on TripAdvisor indicate that learning is indeed an important expectation on visits to these attractions. Interactions with docents on museum tours, for instance, relate to the historical content of the tour, either seeking out new information or looking for validation of existing knowledge. A tourist visiting the Witch Village, for instance, asked the guide that Giles Corey “was the only man killed, right?” while another asked for further information on prison conditions in colonial America at the Witch Dungeon.⁵⁰⁵ Nearly every post in the TripAdvisor comments on these attractions evaluates the informational value of the tour they went on.⁵⁰⁶ Positive reviews typically

⁵⁰⁴ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁵⁰⁵ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019 and Salem Witch Village, August 2018.

⁵⁰⁶ “Salem Witch Museum,” TripAdvisor https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103632-Reviews-Salem_Witch_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html; “Salem Witch History Museum,” TripAdvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d1746107-Reviews-or10-Witch_History_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS; “Witch Dungeon,” TripAdvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103634-Reviews-or5-Witch_Dungeon_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS; “Salem Wax Museum of Witches and

praise these sites as “very interesting and informative!” or “We learned loads of stuff and enjoyed the experience, it’s fun to feel like you’re walking through history” or that they enjoyed that the Witch Dungeon “showed what it was like” to be imprisoned in 1692.⁵⁰⁷ Conversely, many of the criticisms center on the lack of informational quality on these tours, often because the guide spoke too quickly or couldn’t answer visitor questions, the mannequins and effects made the experience too frightening for children to learn anything, or because the tour did not offer much new information compared to other sites or they found the quality lacking compared to another guide.⁵⁰⁸ In this way, the didactic function of the venue seems essential to their production and consumption as tourist objects.

Although historical interpretation of 1692 structures the museum scripts at these sites, the exhibitions draw upon the environmental and narrative trappings of thrill attractions, dungeon museums, and prison tours to package education in terms like “the

Seafarers,” Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103635-Reviews-Salem_Wax_Museum_of_Witches_Seafarers-Salem_Massachusetts.html; “Salem Witch Village,” Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103633-Reviews-Salem_Witch_Village-Salem_Massachusetts.html

⁵⁰⁷ David S, “Very interesting!” https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d1746107-Reviews-or10-Witch_History_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS; SeveDega, “Nice but short,” July 2019, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d1746107-Reviews-or10-Witch_History_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS; chemle71, “It was fine,” November 2019, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103634-Reviews-or5-Witch_Dungeon_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS

⁵⁰⁸ “Salem Witch Museum,” Tripadvisor https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103632-Reviews-Salem_Witch_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html; “Salem Witch History Museum,” Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d1746107-Reviews-or10-Witch_History_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS; “Witch Dungeon,” Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103634-Reviews-or5-Witch_Dungeon_Museum-Salem_Massachusetts.html#REVIEWS; “Salem Wax Museum of Witches and Seafarers,” Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103635-Reviews-Salem_Wax_Museum_of_Witches_Seafarers-Salem_Massachusetts.html; “Salem Witch Village,” Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d103633-Reviews-Salem_Witch_Village-Salem_Massachusetts.html

most exciting experience in Salem!”⁵⁰⁹ As outlined by Philip Stone in his study of The Dungeon visitor attractions operated by the Merlin Entertainments Group, these sorts of thrilling dungeon sites are commercialized products “essentially built upon instilling a sense of fear, trepidation, novelty and excitement into the customer experience.

Revolving around the ‘gruesome past,’ The Dungeons combine live actors, shows, rides, and special effects to bring life to the dead as visitors move from exhibit to exhibit” to engage subjects, including witchcraft, that are otherwise taboo in museums.⁵¹⁰ Critically, “a fundamental feature of The Dungeon concept is the ability to tap into visitor emotions...with the sense of shock, horror, and revulsion and to create a safe congregant space where unsafe ideas of the taboo may be inspected close up through a morbid gaze.”⁵¹¹ Dungeon attractions rely heavily on representations of bodily suffering. Here, these Salem attractions have much in common with European dungeon museums. These enact scenes of torture, the supernatural, or macabre historical events (such as Jack the Ripper’s murders) for entertainment, stripping them of their “connections to the moral world” and contemporary political connections to themes such as government torture or violence against women.⁵¹²

Salem’s attractions exhibit many of these design elements and representations of the macabre and supernatural. Audio-visual design elements amplify the horrific elements of the narration to create an overall experience of eeriness and entertainment, as

⁵⁰⁹ “Witch History Museum,” Brochure, 2018.

⁵¹⁰ Philip Stone, “‘It’s a Bloody Guide’: Fun, Fear, and a Lighter Side of Dark Tourism at the Dungeon Visitor Attractions, UK,” in *The Darker Side of Travel*, Sharpley and Stone, 170-171.

⁵¹¹ Stone, “‘It’s a Bloody Guide,’” 171.

⁵¹² Stone, “‘It’s a Bloody Guide,’” 182.

opposed to the didactic tone that visitors would find at more traditional museums and historic sites like the Rebecca Nurse Homestead or Witch House, discussed in Chapter Four. The Witch Village, Witch Museum, Witch History Museum, and Witch Dungeon use low lighting for much of their interpretive space, employing the actual darkness of tourists' experience to underscore the historical and moral darkness of the distant past. Sound effects replicate things like howling New England winds, the shrieks of hysterical girls and the rattling of chains, prisoners' groans, and thunder, adding even more sinister trappings for the interpretation. Each site includes at least one portrayal of torture, usually of Giles Corey. They also dwell heavily on the display and abuse of prisoners' bodies. Notably, the Witch Village departs from its interpretation of witchcraft – including descriptions of Giles Corey's pressing and inquisitorial torture in the Middle Ages – to describe how colonial townspeople hanged pirates and displayed their corpses along the docks as travelers, merchants, and maritime laborers came into the harbor. Piracy and criminal cultures appear nowhere else in the attraction's narrative.⁵¹³ These sites also include representations of the accused witches' executions, with mannequins in colonial clothing hanging from trees or waiting to die with nooses around their necks, bodies posed in coffins, and descriptions of the lack of respect shown to the executed after death (for instance, with bodies being thrown into a shallow crevice rather than buried and body parts remaining open to view and the elements).⁵¹⁴ Many of these sites also position mannequins and wax figures in distorted positions meant to represent the bewitched

⁵¹³ Salem Witch Village, August 2018.

⁵¹⁴ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

children in the throes of hysterical fits. Critically, interpretation does not build towards a larger interrogation of power, incarceration, or historical valuations of human life and physical autonomy. Functionally, then, they mostly provoke disgust, horror, and historical distance for tourists.

Edutainment sites also blend historical events with suggestions of the actual presence of the supernatural in Salem. Interpretive panels or voiceovers might wonder whether the Devil really did his work in Salem, or suggest that some women truly did seek supernatural powers. They associate Tituba with stories and tricks of magic and alleged voodoo, for instance, while the Witch History Museum depicts a scene of teenage girls dancing around in the woods with the Devil, entering into diabolical pacts, and gaining demon familiars.⁵¹⁵ Other elements might include a dragon figure at the conclusion of the Witch Village tour, asking visitors to touch a surviving beam from the original Salem Gaol at the Witch Dungeon for good luck, or depicting the ghost of Giles Corey coming back to haunt Salem as an omen of ill-fortune.⁵¹⁶ The term “witch” is extremely mutable, particularly in Salem, where historical witches exist alongside Wiccan witches, fictional witches, Halloween witches, and a more generalized archetype of a witch or a hag. Because of this issue of terminology, attractions need to carefully parse these categories to avoid the conflation of actual human beings with the supernatural or the Wicked Witch of the West. However, the modes of interpretation at

⁵¹⁵ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵¹⁶ Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

edutainment sites deliberately blur the lines between them.⁵¹⁷ All of this contributes to an overall tone of fright, horror, and alienation at the expense of historical understanding and the dehumanization of the victims of 1692.

However, many of these sites do not function wholly as thrill or dungeon attractions either, as they conclude on an emotional note meant to dissipate unease. For instance, the Wax Museum interprets other periods of Salem history such as the growth of the city's maritime trade after the witchcraft period.⁵¹⁸ Docents at the Witch Village and Witch Museum conclude their tours with interpretations of contemporary Wicca, framing the religion as a positive one premised on inflicting no harm and gender equity. They also reinterpret often sinister cultural symbols like the pentagram as Wiccan symbols for protection, explaining that they have been appropriated and reframed in threatening ways by non-witches.⁵¹⁹ As noted above, the didactic function of the tour material shapes the structure of the tour, not the affect of a scare from encountering a particularly grisly tableau. In this way, the for-profit edutainment witchcraft attractions function as hybridizations of multiple museum genres.

The crisis represented in Salem's edutainment attractions highlight individuals' suffering under unjust legal proceedings and imprisonment, which brings witchcraft tourism into conversation with prison tourism. Michael Welch defines penal tourism as tourism of prisons and of punishment in general for the purposes of "remembrance,

⁵¹⁷ Tour guides in 2016, 2018, and 2019 could not quite articulate why a beam supposedly from a jail housing hundreds of falsely accused persons suffering inhumane conditions would bring modern visitors good fortune.

⁵¹⁸ Salem Wax Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁵¹⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch Village, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

education, or even entertainment.”⁵²⁰ He places prison tourism under the umbrella of dark tourism, as outlined by John Lennon and Malcolm Foley.⁵²¹ Lennon and Foley argue that touristic interest in sites of disaster and suffering are a postmodern phenomenon of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries driven by the proliferation of mass travel and mass media. In addition, visiting “the objects of dark tourism themselves appear to introduce anxiety and doubt about the project of modernity (e.g. the use of 'rational planning' and technological innovation to undertake the Jewish Holocaust, the industrial scale of death in several wars this century...)”⁵²² Welch finds that prison museums can similarly trouble notions of modernity, and often include interpretation of the role of science and medicine in developing restraints, execution techniques, and other forms of carceral cruelty.⁵²³ Following Bennett, Welch also finds that prisons and museums are similar cultural technologies that uphold state power through the institutionalization of sight and social regulation. “The carceral system relied on 'hard' measures of power, the museum opted for a 'soft' application, thereby advancing the state's ambition to promote art and culture... Sites for penal tourism operate as mechanisms for social production with respect to order.”⁵²⁴ Given the imposing nature of prison architecture, narratives of suffering, sites of execution, and proliferation of sacred materiality (such as crosses or prison chapels), prison tourism is designed to convince tourists of the “overall

⁵²⁰ Michael Welch, *Escape to Prison: Penal Tourism and the Pull of Punishment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 1, 21.

⁵²¹ Lennon and Foley, *Dark Tourism*. For more on dark tourism, see Seaton, “Guided by the Dark,” 234-244; Sion, *Death Tourism*; Sharpley and Stone, *The Darker Side of Travel*; Williams, *Memorial Museums*; Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*.

⁵²² Lennon and Foley, *Dark Tourism*, 11.

⁵²³ Welch, *Escape to Prison*, 17.

⁵²⁴ Welch, *Escape to Prison*, 27, 33.

authenticity” of the prison.⁵²⁵ At the same time, however, prison museums’ function as sites of recreation offer visitors an “escape” that is commemorated through activities such as taking photographs or purchasing souvenirs in gift shops.⁵²⁶

Treatments of prisons in witchcraft tourism dovetail in some ways with Welch’s characterization of penal tourism, in that they center narratives of imprisonment and court systems and often depict such scenes in their built environment. For instance, the Witch Dungeon recreates the Salem Gaol as a linchpin of its interpretive space, while the Witch History Museum, Witch Museum, and Wax Museum include displays of courtroom and prison scenes, and the Witch Village depicts scenes of torture like Giles Corey’s pressing at the hands of Salem’s sheriff.⁵²⁷ However, studies of prison tourism examine museums in decommissioned prisons.⁵²⁸ As noted above, the jail that housed the accused witches no longer exists and has been replaced by dioramas in for-profit edutainment attractions. Necessarily, then, these sites operate as colonial carceral fantasy spaces, functioning more as the “escape” from modern life identified by Welch than an interrogation of it. Docents at the Witch Dungeon try to read the interpretive space as a semi-authentic prison space standing in for the original jail by emphasizing the ways in which it has been recreated according to the same specifications as the original building and highlighting a

⁵²⁵ Welch, *Escape to Prison*, 7.

⁵²⁶ Welch, *Escape to Prison*, 19, 25.

⁵²⁷ Salem Witch Village, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018; Salem Wax Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵²⁸ Welch, *Escape to Prison*; Seth C. Bruggeman, "Reforming the Carceral Past: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Challenge of the Twenty-First Century Prison Museum." *Radical History Review* 113 (2012), 171-186; Jacqueline Z. Wilson, *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

surviving beam from that seventeenth century jail on display. They encourage visitors to experience a direct connection to the past by touching the beam.⁵²⁹ The use of mannequins and dungeon museum-style effects produces these spaces operating in conjunction with alienation from the original prison space precludes much of the sacralization of space in mainstream prison tourism, producing imprisonment primarily as a site of play and fascination for white, middle-class audiences.

These sites further invert the work of Welch's and theorists of dark tourism like Lennon and Foley by suggesting that penal tourism and sites of suffering raise insecurities in notions of progress and modernity for tourists. In general, treatments of the law and punishment seem to offer visitors reassurance of their place in a modern, enlightened age. The Witch Village, for instance, ties torture and judicial violence to medieval inquisitions and a time when pirates sailed the Atlantic coast, as described above.⁵³⁰ The Witch Museum explicitly locates the violence of the witch trials as a peculiar excess of the past, reminding visitors at the conclusion of its narration that New Englanders should praise the fact that they only gave way to their fears once, and "briefly."⁵³¹ In descriptions of prisons here and at the Witch History Museum, the narration and docents describe elements of colonial prisons – such as the existence of jail fees – in terms of their effect on those accused of witchcraft, and the two seem conflated. While the witch trials ended by 1693, the mistreatment of incarcerated persons did not. The Witch Dungeon also locates carceral violence in the past. A guide in 2016, for

⁵²⁹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁵³⁰ Salem Witch Village, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁵³¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

instance, claimed that the Salem Witch Trials have a bit of a silver lining in that they improved the American legal system, for instance by eliminating the use of spectral evidence from law practice.⁵³² In another visit in 2019, the guide gave lavish descriptions of bodily suffering under old systems of punishment and humiliation, describing stocks, beatings, and brandings as evidence of how unfair or irrational punishment was “back then.”⁵³³ Carceral violence is contained historically through docents’ interpretation, and conflated with a vanished prison and no longer extant crimes like witchcraft. At witchcraft attractions, then, interpreters create entertainment for predominately white, middle-class visitors by describing grotesque prison conditions in ways that are wholly disconnected from carceral violence writ large. The functions of dark tourism and penal tourism seem designed to reassure visitors about modernity, not question it.

Jacqueline Wilson examines Australia’s penal tourism to question the degree to which prisoners’ voices are legible at these sites, and the degree to which prison tourism otherizes the incarcerated and troubles Australians’ sense of their national character.⁵³⁴ Wilson finds that “the stories of inmates, “who are 'othered' by society,” are usually the narratives that get lost in prison tourism.⁵³⁵ They are othered by their legal and social transgressions as criminals, and then they are othered again by public historians as “historical entities.”⁵³⁶ The interpretation of prison space further elides the violence of

⁵³² Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016. While this is technically true, it should also be noted that the use of spectral evidence as a key means of gaining a conviction was highly unusual to begin with; typically, witchcraft cases relied on visible acts of *maleficium*, such as an injury or illness, confirmed by two eye witnesses. Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 50; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 208.

⁵³³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2019.

⁵³⁴ Wilson, *Prison*.

⁵³⁵ Wilson, *Prison*, 1.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid*.

incarceration by marketing decommissioned prisons with their romanticized, Gothic aesthetic appeal and removing the most discomforting signs of violence from the interpretive space. According to Wilson, “such euphemization in a supposed public history site is of a piece with the routine 'sprucing up' such sites undergo before their presentation to the public, and stands, along with jocular dioramas...and so on, as active yet unrecognized impediments to the imagination needed to empathize with the multitudes of ordinary prisoners who spent their days and years endeavoring simply to get by.”⁵³⁷ Ideally, then, prison museums ought to work to advance tourists’ understandings of the penal system as violence, center the dignity and individuality of incarcerated individuals in interpretation, and incorporate prisons and prison populations into visitors’ conceptions of the nation.

Depicting scenes of punishment for entertainment in Salem’s for-profit attractions perpetuates the othering of prison populations identified by Wilson. In general, exhibit designs and docent narration create horror through the violation of abstracted bodies more than legal suffering inflicted on actual people. The Witch Museum, Witch History Museum, and Witch Dungeon, for instance, include tableaux with nameless bodies hanging from trees.⁵³⁸ At the Witch Dungeon, docents describe features of colonial prisons like “coffin cells” – cells the approximate size of a telephone booth with the inmate shackled to the wall – without much reference to the particular people who

⁵³⁷ Wilson, *Prison*, 60.

⁵³⁸ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

endured those conditions. Another docent in 2019 used this abstraction as a source of humor, describing corporal punishment of children as something which parents and teachers might like to have back when dealing with unruly children.⁵³⁹ When they do invoke specific people, such as Dorcas Good, who at age four was charged with witchcraft and imprisoned with her mother Sarah Good, docents seem to treat these individuals mostly as vehicles for further descriptions of punishment. Visitors do not learn what the Goods lives were like prior to imprisonment or how they fell under suspicion of witchcraft. They only hear that Dorcas lived for months in darkness, which was “torture” for a young mind, left her incapable of speech, and drove her to an early death as a teenager.⁵⁴⁰ In this way, the Dungeon’s interpretation makes their status as prisoners the salient features of Sarah and Dorcas Goods’ lives, rather than the violence and disruption that imprisonment inflicted on their lives and personhood. Carceral violence appears vanished or symptomatic of a strange, violent period that believed in magic instead of a foundational part of American life.

The disconnect between the experience of imprisonment and the humanity of those incarcerated makes violence itself a spectacle and a source of entertainment for white middle-class audiences who, as Seth C. Bruggeman notes in his study of Eastern State Penitentiary, are the least likely population to have direct experience with incarceration and are the most likely to dehumanize imprisoned individuals.⁵⁴¹ This is particularly problematic in Salem where sites like the Witch History Museum single out

⁵³⁹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2019.

⁵⁴⁰ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016.

⁵⁴¹ Bruggeman, "Reforming the Carceral Past," 172-174.

two enslaved Black women as having actually practiced magic and largely escaped punishment, unlike the white residents of Essex County who suffered imprisonment and execution for a crime they did not commit. The Witch History Museum's narration describes how Tituba and her husband "sparked" the witch crisis with their practice of "voodoo," and although Parris beat her into confessing this, she readily went on to accuse many other (white) people of witchcraft.⁵⁴² On a 2016 visit, the audio recording also included a scene of Judge Jonathan Hathorne trying an enslaved woman named Candy. The narration opens with a women's voice speaking in caricatured AAVE declaring herself guilty of witchcraft. The audio then describes how Candy, also a voodoo practitioner, used to stick pins in a poppet with her owner Mrs. Hawkes. Candy procured the poppet for the court. The narrator claims that in the process of examining and destroying the poppet, Candy screamed, burned herself, and attempted to drown herself in a river. The court freed Candy but Mrs. Hawkes went to prison on charges of witchcraft.⁵⁴³ As noted above, however, Margaret Hawkes did not go to prison as a result of Candy's testimony, likely due to doubts on the part of the magistrates about the testimony of an enslaved woman and Hawkes' position as a high-status widow.⁵⁴⁴

The details about Candy burning herself and trying to drown herself in the river seem at best to be a misreading of Candy's examination that contributes to her diminishment as a childish, racist caricature. In their examination, Judges Hathorne and Gedney did examine the poppet she procured in the court. When they burned it, the

⁵⁴² Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵⁴³ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016.

⁵⁴⁴ Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 205.

afflicted children cried out that they had been burned also. When they doused it in water, two of the afflicted choked as if drowning while a third ran towards the river before being stopped.⁵⁴⁵

Centering Candy in this narrative, rather than the white woman who held her in slavery and presumably held the actual power in their household, positions the Black woman as peculiarly guilty of the crime they both allegedly committed. This also aligns voodoo with guilt and the existence of actual malign magic, in contrast to witchcraft which the narration and docents describe as a fantasy of the seventeenth century and of which the white accused men and women were innocent.⁵⁴⁶ Thus, witchcraft attractions create a prison imaginary that unduly victimized innocent white people and failed to hold seemingly guilty Black people accountable. These sites do not ask visitors to sympathize with prisoners in general or to see imprisonment as violence in and of itself regardless of inmates' guilt or innocence, but to see the violation of white innocence as tragic.

As Seth C. Bruggeman notes in his study of Eastern State Penitentiary, public history does little to engage with mass incarceration, even while it has made advances in interpreting daily life for prisoners in jail museums. This is particularly problematic considering that at the time that he conducted his study in 2012, 1 in 30 Americans had been incarcerated, yet the predominately white, middle-class museum-going audience indicated that they did not typically engage with issues of incarceration or the criminal justice system.⁵⁴⁷ Salem's edutainment sites certainly do not engage with the systemic

⁵⁴⁵ "SWP No. 023: Candy," *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, University of Virginia, <http://saalem.lib.virginia.edu/n23.html>

⁵⁴⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵⁴⁷ Bruggeman, "Reforming the Carceral Past," 172-174.

nature of carceral violence either. Given their emphasis on entertainment, they might not be best equipped to chart the development of mass incarceration in the United States.

However, because these sites are “edutainment” attractions that draw on traditional museum forms or, in the case of the Witch Dungeon, are positioned by docents as authentic prison spaces, interpreters give these narratives a gloss of historical accuracy. Thus, the ways in which exhibits and narrators locate carceral violence and injustice in the past and position Black women as particularly criminal reproduces modern stereotypes about Black criminality and positive characterizations of the contemporary justice system in white media as historically accurate. This is potentially harmful considering the violence still perpetuated by law enforcement on imprisoned populations, particularly in communities of color.

However, they might highlight for the majority white, middle-class audience in Salem how deeply rooted economic and racial inequalities are in America’s court systems. Much of the tour of the prison space at the Dungeon Museum already serves as a vehicle for docents to describe how the poor tended to suffer most in prison. As noted above, prisoners in 1692 had to pay jail fees, including the cost of their food, and often found themselves incarcerated for prison debt even after they had been cleared of witchcraft charges.⁵⁴⁸ In addition, the poor, single women, and women of color such as the enslaved Tituba tended to be the most vulnerable to witchcraft charges without white men of status to advocate for them in court.⁵⁴⁹ It seems that docents might insert a line or

⁵⁴⁸ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 42, 233.

⁵⁴⁹ See Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 20; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 32; Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 60-94.

two into their scripts highlighting this as an institutionalized inequality that continues to affect Americans long after the close of the Witch Trials. In its audio-narration of the Salem Witch Trials, for instance, the Witch Museum highlights, albeit a bit clumsily, that seventeenth-century people targeted those who were “different” with their accusations, just as (presumably white) people in the present target those of other races. Therefore, visitors should not see it as an accident that Salemites first accused a Black woman (per the narration) at the beginning of the witch trials. Given an interpretive emphasis on colonial prisons and courts, it does not seem inappropriate for docents to at least draw some connections between past and present inequities in the criminal justice system, particularly since the overall tone of these sites is horrific. Highlighting how Salem’s most marginalized populations tended to be the most vulnerable abuses to the legal system would be on-mission and tonally consistent. Similarly, docents could gesture towards continuities in guards’ ability to perpetrate violence in their interpretation of Sheriff George Corwin, who abused prisoners despite such behavior being technically illegal, as noted above. Even if interpreters do not interrogate the origins of the prison industrial complex for tourists, they could at least gesture towards continuities in carceral violence and, as Lennon and Foley note in their studies of dark tourist attractions, raise questions about notions of modernity, progress, and imprisonment.

Edutainment Sites and Authenticity

Given the ways in which edutainment sites combine traditional didactic museum elements with entertainment, witchcraft tourism also plays with notions of authenticity in

tourism. Theorists of tourism such as Dean MacCannell, John Urry, Edward Bruner, and David Thelen argue that authenticity, or the appearance thereof, is central to the appeal of touristic sites. However, the interplay between perceived authenticity, staging and performance, the tourist gaze, have made the question of authenticity is something of a vexed issue in tourism studies. David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig argue that perceived authenticity, achieved through architectural preservation and the display of material culture, are central to the appeal of museums, allowing visitors to actively engage in using and understanding the past. They find that Americans perceive them as "the most trustworthy sources for information about history, because they provide an unmediated experience with authentic objects."⁵⁵⁰ For some, the reconstructions or reconfiguring of the built environment reads as less authentic.⁵⁵¹ This poses a problem for tourist boosters in Salem where, with the exception of the Witch House and Rebecca Nurse Homestead discussed in Chapter Four, virtually no sites associated with the Salem Witch Trials survive. As a result, sites like the Witch Museum draw upon other forms of museological authorities to establish their expertise and authenticate their narratives, as outlined above.

MacCannell argues in *The Tourist* that tourism is a product of superficial consumerism inherent in modern capitalist societies. Seeking to escape the shallowness of their own lives, tourists have to travel to other places or periods to find meaning and authenticity.⁵⁵² However, MacCannell also argues that the authentic can never be

⁵⁵⁰ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 21-22.

⁵⁵¹ Edward M. Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 11.

⁵⁵² Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976). See also Dean MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sightseeing* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

experienced.⁵⁵³ In addition, for MacCannell, tourists often have a difficult time discerning authenticity from stagecraft, “mystification,” and “a little lie.”⁵⁵⁴ James Urry, by contrast, theorizes the existence of a “post-tourist” who seeks “experiences which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life,” but knows and enjoys the fact that they will not find authenticity in tourism. Instead, post-tourists “find pleasure in the multiplicity of tourist games” and “take delight” in touristic contrivances – “they know there is no authentic tourist experience, that there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played.”⁵⁵⁵ Further, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, “exhibitions are fundamentally theatrical, for they are how museums perform the knowledge they create.”⁵⁵⁶ Exhibitionary elements like the dioramas employed by the edutainment attractions in Salem especially are “immersive and environmental,” and they “privilege an

2011). Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1992). MacCannell also engages in extremely colonized thinking (for example by taking constructions of the “primitive” and “primitive societies” uncritically), and despite asserting in his introduction to *The Tourist* that feminist theory would offer useful insights into the experience of tourism, his “tourist” remains a white, upper-middle class male over the decades of his scholarship. For studies that engage non-Western constructions of Western-ness, see for instance Joy Hendry, *The Orient Strikes Back: A Global View of Cultural Display* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Nick Stanley, *Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1998).

⁵⁵³ Edward Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959). For more on performance theory, see Lisa Woolfork, *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); John Urry et al, *Performing Tourist Places* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004); Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: The Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁵⁴ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 101, 107.

⁵⁵⁵ Urry and Larson, *The Tourist Gaze*, 1. Also John Urry, *Consuming Places*, (New York: Routledge, 1995). For additional constructions of the “tourist,” see Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper, 1964). Louis Turner and John Ashe, *The Golden Hordes* (London: Constable, 1975) and Erik Cohen, “A Phenomenology of Tourist Types,” *Sociology* 13 (1979), 179-201.

⁵⁵⁶ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 3.

experience and tend to thematize rather than set their subject forth."⁵⁵⁷ The obvious staging of sites like the Witch History Museum or literal commodification of witchcraft in museum gift shops do not necessarily preclude tourists from deriving emotional experiences from visits to edutainment attractions.

Martin Hall notes that museums are now shaped by deindustrialization, new ethnic identities, service economies, and a loss of credibility in the idea of progress in the face of obvious inequalities.⁵⁵⁸ As a result, an “experience economy” offers forms of engagement through education, escapism, entertainment, and aesthetics.⁵⁵⁹ This “experiential complex” offers those with the means to travel a postcolonial fantasy of a “customized world,” and the chance to enact an idealized identity via “technologies of simulation.”⁵⁶⁰ Tourists derive pleasure from an awareness of simulation, but at the same time, sites rely on material objects for authority. As mass simulation characterizes more and more tourism, there is a greater need for an anchor to reality, namely, an authentic object that is “diverted from circulation as a commodity” and “enclaved.”⁵⁶¹ Thus, the Witch Dungeon museum touts a beam from the original site of the Salem Gaol as a signal of the site’s authenticity even as the rest of the performance surrounding it represents a lost original.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 3-4.

⁵⁵⁸ Martin Hall, “The Reappearance of the Authentic,” in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 76.

⁵⁵⁹ Hall, “The Reappearance of the Authentic,” 77.

⁵⁶⁰ Hall, “The Reappearance of the Authentic,” 78.

⁵⁶¹ Hall, “The Reappearance of the Authentic,” 93.

⁵⁶² Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

Given the lack of surviving material culture from 1692, the mixture of entertainment and educational forms, and the stagecraft at play in edutainment sites' dioramas and performances, these attractions entail a great deal of slippage between authenticity, theatricality, and commercialism. For instance, the Witch Dungeon's interpretation opens with costumed actresses playing out courtroom scenes acting out segments of court documents that will allow visitors to "witness" an actual witchcraft trial and form a direct connection to 1692.⁵⁶³ The amorphousness of play and constructed authenticity could potentially be a strength for edutainment sites considering how in more traditional museum settings authenticity often functionally limits the incorporation of women, the lower-classes, and enslaved people.

Bodies of public history scholarship acknowledge that when tourists and tourist boosters narrowly equate the "authentic" and notions of historical accuracy with "extant," this can imply that the narratives told through reconstructed houses of the working class, reproductions of their material culture, and so on, are somehow less real or authentic than the well-preserved, well-documented pasts of elite white people that have been favored in preservation and archival strategies since the nineteenth century at least.⁵⁶⁴ As Jennifer Pustz notes, even well-intentioned curators interested in inclusive histories can be frustrated by the elite collections, associations, and interpretive emphases they have inherited from earlier generations. Even when curators engage in "aggressive" collecting policies, the material culture on display may not be sufficient to support a well-rounded

⁵⁶³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁵⁶⁴ See Rex Ellis, "Interpreting the Whole House," in Donnelly, 61-80. Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historic House Museums* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010). Handler and Gable, *New*.

interpretation of the lower-classes, necessitating a definition of authenticity and scholarly rigor that does not center exclusively complete architectural, material, and documentary records.⁵⁶⁵ As noted by Rex Ellis and Richard Handler and Eric Gable, those invested in conservative, white supremacist narratives and those afraid to confront their discomfort with discussing subject like race typically point to a lack of historical documentation and poor research as evidence that the history of marginalized groups is often inaccurate, unknowable, and thus unnecessary to incorporate in museums.⁵⁶⁶

In their examination of docents' interpretation of enslaved people in Colonial Williamsburg, for instance, Handler and Gable located part of this push-pull between conservative and inclusive approaches to interpreting histories in understandings about what made histories of enslaved persons "authentic," and thus appropriate for interpretation. Critically, the staff at Colonial Williamsburg were "able to justify their discomfort, while avoiding the taint of explicit racism, because they believed that black history was 'undocumented,' [and lacking] the same just-the-facts authenticity as the stories they could tell about the elite white inhabitants of the town."⁵⁶⁷ Sticking to the "facts," as many white interpreters did at Colonial Williamsburg, can perpetuate the dehumanization of enslaved men and women. Many interpreters, for instance, would only refer to slaves in terms found in the historical record – namely their monetary value to their masters.⁵⁶⁸ The question of authenticity in recreations and reproduced material

⁵⁶⁵ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 7-8.

⁵⁶⁶ Ellis, "Interpreting the Whole House," 62-3, 68. Handler and Gable, *New*, 25, 84. See also Eric Gable, Richard Handler, and Anna Lawson, "On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg," *American Ethnologist* 19 (1992), 798-800.

⁵⁶⁷ Gable and Handler, *New*, 84.

⁵⁶⁸ Gable and Handler, *New*, 114-5.

culture also tended to perpetuate erasure. At Williamsburg's Wythe House, one upstairs bedroom was decorated with furniture and material objects (such as African beads) in order to evoke the presence of slaves in the residence. In training, docents were told to use this setting to interpret the lives of female slaves in the Whythe House, and in colonial households more broadly. However, because there was no authentic "evidence" of a specific slave sleeping on that particular pallet in that room in that configuration, some interpreters determined that there was no factual basis that would merit interpretation.⁵⁶⁹ Through training, research, and theoretical assumptions about authenticity and the telling of history, they encourage museum professionals to be conscious of the "disjunction between the social construction of knowledge, through multiplex and ongoing conversations...and [a model that] privileges 'documented facts' to the exclusion of all other sources of information."⁵⁷⁰ Pustz further argues that when grounded in rigorous scholarship, "conjecture should not be a dirty word" and used to incorporate expansive interpretation of women, the working class, and people of color.⁵⁷¹

Salem tourism writ large, encompassing the mansions, port, and Customs House associated with wealthy families who made their fortunes in the maritime trade, the houses of Revolutionary leaders, and structures associated with Nathaniel Hawthorne, has perpetuated a narrow view of heritage and public history defined by great white men.⁵⁷²

According to an informational interview, local tourism has catered to a white middle-

⁵⁶⁹ Gable and Handler, *New*, 89.

⁵⁷⁰ Gable and Handler, *New*, 90.

⁵⁷¹ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 11.

⁵⁷² Site Visit, National Maritime Historic Site, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, September 2019; Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

class audience and has been staffed by predominately white workers. As a result, the Park Service has only started to incorporate Black history in the last few years, and only very slowly. The issues of documentary and material survival identified by Handler and Gable above have hindered efforts to tell inclusive histories of Salem, and have made it particularly difficult to break whitewashed views of histories among tourists, particularly those who learned history before 1980.⁵⁷³ As in Colonial Williamsburg, docents at sites like the House of Seven Gables, a historic house museum associated with Nathaniel Hawthorne's family, do not engage with the presence of enslaved people in the home beyond listing their names and noting that not much more is known about them from historical documentation.⁵⁷⁴

Edutainment sites associated with the Salem Witch Trials could use their lack of connection to surviving material culture or structures to their advantage and use their porous boundaries between historical authenticity, display, and heightened emotion to center women, the enslaved, and the poor in their narratives that staff and tourists might not accept as legitimate at traditional museum sites. To an extent, as will be discussed below, these attractions already incorporate the presence of women, enslaved people, and the impoverished to a greater extent than other public history attractions in Salem. Interpreters could use the constructed-ness of these sites to develop scripts that incorporate grounded conjecture and extant documentation to center emotions and affect of marginalized groups. The aura of authenticity created through docent narratives and

⁵⁷³ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁵⁷⁴ Site Visit, House of Seven Gables, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

exhibit design can be used to uphold these people as important historical subjects and render them “knowable.”

Race, Gender, and Genre Potential

The for-profit edutainment attractions in Salem offer what Philip Stone refers to as the “lighter side of dark tourism,” offering entertainment at least as much as education. They certainly do not function as sites of conscience, which emphasize the intersection between museum practice and commemoration as discussed in Chapter Two. However, these sites do represent the suffering and deaths of real people, traffic in tropes of race, gender, and colonialism, and frame these narratives as “historically accurate.”⁵⁷⁵ Thus it seems that these sites have an obligation to, at a minimum, not interpret history in ways that reproduce harmful stereotypes of women, particularly women of color.

This begs the question of what a Salem witchcraft thrill attraction should look like, or if that is indeed even possible. Erica Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton and Monica Eileen Patterson write in *Curating Difficult Knowledge* that public historians and tourist boosters should “take the word ‘curate’ in its root meaning of ‘caring for,’” as this “allows us to expand our discussion outward from museums and exhibitions to encompass heritage sites, memorials, and other (including virtual) locations along the increasingly interlinked spectrum of spaces dedicated to connecting publics with difficult histories.”⁵⁷⁶

They note that bringing visitors into contact with images of traumatic events is not

⁵⁷⁵ “Witch History Museum,” Witch History Museum, <http://www.witchhistorymuseum.com/witchhistory.html>.

⁵⁷⁶ Erica Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton and Monica Eileen Patterson, *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 4.

necessarily effective in preventing their occurrence in the future, and that as a result "memory-workers have begun to explore other modes, including attempts to kindle social aspirations like empathy, identification, cross-cultural dialogue, to recognize multiple perspectives, or to catalyze action."⁵⁷⁷ Just because edutainment attractions do not function as traditional didactic museum sites meant to interrogate the historical contours of colonialism, gender, religion, and the law does not mean that they cannot perform some cultural work in pushing back against the harmful stereotypes of women, particularly Black women, circulating in popular understandings of the Salem Witch Trials.

Interpretation at edutainment attractions does not successfully balance the demands of historical interpretation and dungeon museum attractions and fails to realize the narrative potential of either genre. Although these sites might not be able to systematically examine colonialism, misogyny, or incarceration, they could draw upon the heightened affect of dungeon attractions to center groups typically marginalized in historical interpretation and in turn draw upon the educational authority conferred by their more traditional didactic elements to authenticate these histories as important and discoverable for white, middle-class audiences. David Lowenthal posits that facts told as stories make the past understandable and make complexities comprehensible.⁵⁷⁸ By combining the affective storytelling of a dungeon museum with interpretation of the Salem Witch Trials, edutainment sites could seek to communicate the lived experiences

⁵⁷⁷ Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, *Curating Difficult Knowledge*, 1.

⁵⁷⁸ See Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past*.

of those caught up in the crisis in ways that more traditional historic sites typically do not, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

However, as will be discussed in more detail below, the assemblage of museum genres at work in edutainment attractions typically achieve the most limited potential of blended touristic forms. Visitors go to these museums under the auspices of a learning experience, but the docents, panels, tableaux, and recorded audio create the “chills” promised in their marketing through the repetition of racist, sexist readings of witchcraft history that uphold marginalization of women and people of color in the present. As noted by Urry and Bennett, the tourist gaze frequently enforces colonial dynamics and is determined by the social background of the visitor. In Salem, this means that this gaze is largely white and middle-class. According to interviews with Salem educators and curators, many, if not most, of the tourists they encounter come to Salem already believing that Tituba and the young afflicted girls started the whole witch hysteria out of boredom and malice.⁵⁷⁹ As shown below, edutainment attractions play these assumptions back for tourists through their museum scripts. Thus, a largely white tourist industry produces traffic in colonial tropes of unruly, racialized femininity and authenticate these regressive stereotypes for a predominately white audience already inclined to see these stereotypes as historically grounded, creating an echo chamber of regressive biases. The elements of horror and didacticism are mutually reinforcing. The entertainment value of

⁵⁷⁹ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018. Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

these attractions shapes the delivery of historical narrative, but the educational framing of these tours produces the more sensationalist tropes as actual history.

Edutainment attractions could invert the power dynamics at play in the existing interpretation to create their narrative of social horror. Instead of positioning Salem's most powerless groups as the perpetrators of a crisis that victimized Salem's middle- and upper-class white men, attractions could derive their elements of horror from the ways in which gendered, classed, and colonial power dynamics contributed to the victimization of Salem's most vulnerable populations in a period of crisis. The Salem Witch Trials were complex, with many contributing factors that docents could establish in the introductory narration, as sites like the Witch Dungeon, Witch Museum, and Witch History Museum do in their tour scripts. The tableaux that comprise the body of the museum interpretation could use horror and affect to challenge regressive stereotypes instead of actively replicating them. For instance, instead of repeating stereotypes of Tituba as a cultural outsider who victimized white New Englanders with voodoo and magic, tour guides could recount how her status as enslaved indigenous woman in the heart of a contested, colonized region led to her scapegoating in the earliest witchcraft accusations. Interpreters could draw on the emotive aspect of curating tragic pasts involving mass death identified by scholars such as Lehrer to recreate individuals' personalities and seek to recapture the emotional experience of a tragedy that can be difficult to grasp from a vantage point of three hundred years after the fact. At a minimum, they should excise the racist and sexist elements of their tours and seek sources of horror and stock characters elsewhere.

White Women

As noted in the Introduction, witchcraft scholars have never, and could never, identify a single explanation for the afflictions in Essex County in 1692, nor can the bewitched children's afflictions be reduced to a singular cause. Scholars have raised evidence for genuine psychological disturbance on the part of the afflicted, intentional coordination among them, or their manipulation as tools in the political, religious, and economic conflicts of adult community members. Demos, for instance, suggests that New Englanders externalized stresses from psychologically disturbing traits within themselves by projecting them onto the figure of the witch. In the case of children and adolescents, Demos suggests that psychologically, teenagers are supposed to resolve the conflicts of childhood and reformulate an independent adult identity. However, seventeenth-century gender norms imposed a future identity for them as wives and mothers. Through fits of possession, an afflicted girl could act in ways typically prohibited to them and express independence and bodily autonomy through behaviors such as professing an inability to eat, while still outwardly conforming to Puritan beliefs.⁵⁸⁰ Benjamin Ray, for instance, notes that the six children most commonly called upon by judges to exhibit their fits in court came from the families of leading church members who felt their church was under attack by diabolic forces and socio-religious turmoil in the region.⁵⁸¹

By calling the afflicted children into court, these men and members of the judiciary legitimized accusations and court proceedings. A few individuals, particularly

⁵⁸⁰ Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 153-212.

⁵⁸¹ Ray, "The Salem Witch Mania," 45.

Thomas Putnam, may have steered witchcraft accusations against the non-elect, or non-members of the church. Putnam in particular, who recorded many of the depositions used in the trials, also repeated a number of stock phrases throughout, raising questions about how much of the testimony utilized in court actually came from the children and how much came from the adults around them.⁵⁸² As noted by Mary Beth Norton, magistrates violated normal court procedure by allowing examining the girls as a group instead of individually, perhaps affording them the opportunity to coordinate. Once in the courtroom, they also allowed the wider community to watch the initial hearings, and particularly in cases where they could not extract a confession, the audience would be allowed to yell, interject with evidence and witness statements, and fits. The spectator quality of the trials helped spread fears about the reality of a witchcraft conspiracy at work in Massachusetts, and, according to Norton, the rapid intensification of the trials indicates how seriously people took allegations of witchcraft.⁵⁸³ Given the scale of the witchcraft crisis, it seems likely that some combination of psychological pressure, a genuine belief in witchcraft, pressure from adults, and willful deception operated within the group of afflicted children and within individual girls to varying degrees over the course of the crisis. Focusing so narrowly on the role of young women with reductive motivations risks essentializing qualities of malice and shallowness as feminine. Equally, it elides the ways in which the various roles of the churchmen, magistrates, the afflicted children, and courtroom audiences interconnected and escalated the witchcraft crisis.

⁵⁸² Ray, "The Salem Witch Mania," 56.

⁵⁸³ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 25-60.

Interpretive panels, pre-recorded audio, and docent tour scripts construct the young girls initially identified as the afflicted as the villains of 1692, accusing innocent neighbors out of boredom and hysterics. The tour through a series of tableaux at the Witch History Museum, for instance, opens with a scene of teenage girls screeching, doing cartwheels, and dancing around a fire in the woods. An audio recording plays girls' shrieks while a man's voice informs tourists that the young women of Salem, influenced by Tituba's tales of voodoo, told local magistrates that the Devil had been luring a coven of witches out to the forest to make pacts with the Devil. They exhibited fits of bewitchment and began identifying members of the community as witches. The scale of the crisis grew as they travelled from town to town pointing out other alleged witches. They even identified George Burroughs – former Salem reverend living in Maine at the time of the trials – as the head of Salem's coven, prompting the sheriff to retrieve him and bring him down to Massachusetts for trial and, eventually, execution.⁵⁸⁴ The docent-led part of the tour reinforces portrayals of the afflicted children as malicious teenagers who claimed to be bewitched when it seemed as if they might get into trouble for their magic tricks and games with Tituba.⁵⁸⁵ Furthermore, according to tour guides, the girls were simply “bored” and “wanted attention” and sought it anyway they could, even if it meant harming numerous people through witchcraft accusations.⁵⁸⁶

Interpretation at the Witch Dungeon amplifies the blame placed on the bewitched children for instigating the witch trials in order to entertain themselves. The interpretation

⁵⁸⁴ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵⁸⁵ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵⁸⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

panels at the opening of the attraction introduce Sarah Churchill, a “girl” who supposedly stated that she had made false accusations of witchcraft “for sport.”⁵⁸⁷ The initial nine girls gained so much attention for their “hideous antics” that others joined in the accusations in order to settle old grudges or spend time in the public eye themselves, thus spreading the scale of the witch trials. The docent on a 2019 site visit reinforced this narrative on the tour of the dungeon space, stopping before a mannequin in a cell that she identified as Susannah Ingersoll. According to the guide, Ingersoll actually was overheard saying that “girls must have some sport” and so she and the other afflicted children had made up the entire witchcraft scare for fun.⁵⁸⁸ Visitors on the tour gasped and did not question that they would do such a thing.⁵⁸⁹ The guide did not mention that the person who seems to have attributed the “sport” quote to the afflicted children was related to accused witches seeking to find the source of accusations against them, or that it could very well be apocryphal.⁵⁹⁰ Again, while it is possible that some people who entered accusations of witchcraft or exhibited signs of bewitchment in order to willfully mislead their communities, many historians agree that others who exhibited signs of bewitchment and testified in court did so for myriad reasons including genuine credulity

⁵⁸⁷ In fact, Churchill was a twenty-five-year-old woman who accused her employer George Jacobs (who possibly beat her) of witchcraft under pressure from court magistrates and others among the afflicted. While she did later claim that she had confessed falsely to witnessing Jacobs’ acts of witchcraft, she claimed to have done so under duress. Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 123-125.

⁵⁸⁸ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁵⁸⁹ Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁵⁹⁰ Marilynne K. Roach, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day by Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege* (Lanham: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2004), 60.

in witchcraft and the powers of the Devil.⁵⁹¹ This provides visitors with a pat, easily digestible narrative of a complex historical period. The fact that edutainment sites settled on a narrative of malicious young women wreaking havoc for an attention-seeking thrill points to the misogyny with which American culture treats young girls, often constructing them as frivolous, narcissistic, and mean.⁵⁹²

On a 2016 site visit to the Salem Witch Dungeon, the tour guide informed visitors that Betty Parris and Abigail Williams claimed bewitchment to avoid getting in trouble for playing forbidden fortunetelling games. Parris, the younger girl, might have felt genuine remorse but Williams had a “different personality” and did not.⁵⁹³ The guided interpretation of the dungeon space developed a narrative beginning with the initial afflictions of the girls under Tituba’s care, their examination at Ingersoll’s tavern leading to more accusations of witchcraft, and eventually the end of the witch trials as the girls reached too far with their accusations by implicating the governor’s wife. The guide did note that stories about Mercy Lewis accusing Elizabeth Proctor of witchcraft over a love affair with John Proctor, a storyline from the play *The Crucible*, did not actually occur, although the play was based on real history.⁵⁹⁴ She did not mention which particular parts Miller grounded in actual history, potentially leaving visitors with the impression that

⁵⁹¹ Motivations for the witch trials and particular participants in them occupies much of Salem’s historiography. See Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*; Demos, *Entertaining Satan*; Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*; Ray, *Satan and Salem*.

⁵⁹² Driscoll, *Girls*, 186; Stacey S. Horn, “Mean Girls or Cultural Stereotype?” *Human Development* 47 (2004), 314-320; Jessica Ringrose, “A New Universal Mean Girl: Examining the Discursive Construction and Social Regulation of a New Feminine Pathology,” *Feminism & Psychology* 16 (November 2006), 405-424.

⁵⁹³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016.

⁵⁹⁴ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016.

other problematic notions of race and gender in this play outlined in Chapter Two have a historical basis and validation. However, while she did correct misassumptions about romantic passions lying at the heart of witchcraft accusations, the guide also half-jokingly explained that afflicted girls likely acted out through witchcraft accusations and fits of bewitchment due to “hormones.”⁵⁹⁵ As at the Witch History Museum, interpretation does not engage the large numbers of people involved in the Salem Witch Trials across demographics. The tour guide in 2019 commented that many people went to jail or lost their lives entirely on the basis of the afflicted testimony. While the afflicted children certainly played a critical role as witnesses in court trials, this narrow focus elides the ways in which the entire legal system – including community leaders like Thomas Putnam who filed charges, religious leaders like Parris who preached against the dangers of witchcraft, juries who handed down convictions, and judges who examined accused, accusers, and witnesses – decided whether or not to send a case to the grand jury. Across three visits in 2016, 2018, and 2019, actresses at the Witch Dungeon staged three different witch trials involving women and girls giving testimony against suspected women. Any male figures involved in the witch trials – jurors, judges – appear only as silent mannequins propped against the back wall.⁵⁹⁶ As a result, the Salem Witch Trials appear mostly as a dramatic conflict between women over apparently petty motives like boredom, hormones, or social resentment. The emphasis on women as accusers and afflicted acting on the basis of these motives codes disorder, irrationality, and spite as

⁵⁹⁵ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2019.

⁵⁹⁶ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

peculiarly feminine. In this way, the witchcraft crisis appears as a female failing, a disastrous overreach of women's agency rather than a social crisis that also depended on a blend of credulity and strategy on the part of the adult men who controlled Salem's courts and pulpits.

The Salem Wax Museum expressly blames the outbreak of the witch trials on the initial afflicted girls as well. One of the first tableaux depicts young women screeching and writhing around on the ground while Tituba looms in the background. The panel explains that "inspired" by Tituba, the girls "launched" the witch trials with "hysterical scenes."⁵⁹⁷ This framing of the girls' bewitchment completely elides a historical context in which most believed sincerely in witchcraft and the presence of adults around them who actually had the capacity to identify witchcraft and pursue action against it. The wording of this panel also positions the afflicted children as completely out of control of their physical and mental faculties with "hysterical scenes" but also as malicious instigators who "launched" the persecution.⁵⁹⁸ In this way, culpability for the witch trials shifts from an entire society, the actions of adult men and community leaders to a much more simplistic understanding of girls and Black women as conniving and in need of patriarchal control.

Interpretation at these attractions expends scant effort to understand the afflicted girls' actions or ground them historically, and what little contextualization there is tends to be undermined by docents or interpretive panels positioning the afflicted girls as

⁵⁹⁷ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁵⁹⁸ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

vicious teenagers lashing out of boredom or viciousness. The guide on a 2016 Witch Dungeon visit, for instance, mentioned in passing that Abigail Williams might have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and acted out as a result, but the guide also discussed how Abigail never exhibited any remorse for her role in the trials and probably never actually believed she was bewitched. According to this guide, many of the initial children to appear bewitched were in their teens and “hormones were involved,” implying that the malice exhibited by the afflicted is innate to girlhood.⁵⁹⁹ This presents the afflicted children’s participation in the witch trials as individual choices motivated by malice and a desire for “sport.” Guides at the Witch History Museum mention that Puritan girls tended to live dull lives learning housewifery from disinterested caretakers, a reductive and historically dubious claim as noted above. Instead, this is meant to explain why girls pretended to be bewitched out of “boredom” and a desire to “attract attention.”⁶⁰⁰ In this way, the afflicted girls appear more as twentieth-century caricatures of anxieties about teenagers beyond their parents’ control than as historical actors.⁶⁰¹ Even when interpretation points towards widespread belief in witchcraft and the weight of seventeenth-century gender expectations for young women, it ultimately falls back on an individualistic explanation for the witch trials in which particular girls acted out of personal discontent. The motives ascribed to these children – malice, boredom, spite,

⁵⁹⁹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016.

⁶⁰⁰ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁰¹ See Perry R. Hinton, “The Cultural Construction of the Girl ‘Teen’: A Cross-cultural Analysis of Feminine Adolescence Portrayed in Popular Culture,” *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 45 (2016), 233-247; Sharon R. Mazzarella, *Girls, Moral Panic, and News Media: Troublesome Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 1-19; Shayla Thiel-Stern, *From the Dance Hall to Facebook: Teen Girls, Mass Media, and Moral Panic in the United States, 1905-2010* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 2.

attention-seeking – are also highly gendered. As discussed below, these attractions portray male actors as motivated by greed and a desire for socio-economic advancement, intellectual interest, or a sincere albeit overzealous religious conviction. Thus, tour guides at sites like the Witch History Museum and Witch Dungeon museum naturalize these qualities of petty cruelty as intrinsic to young women.

Docents could complicate narratives surrounding the afflicted without compromising their atmosphere of horror by allowing for a range of possible motives on the parts of the children and incorporating more of the power dynamics between the ministers and magistrates, the bewitched, and crowd of spectators in the courtroom. The recorded audio and docent narration already deploy the scaffolding for this sort of discussion. For instance, the Witch Museum, Witch History Museum, and Witch Dungeon dedicate part of the tour to an explanation of why the bewitched children exhibited signs of affliction, mention intense belief in the Devil and how Reverend Parris exacerbated religious tensions in his community in the opening contextual framing of the tours, and generally mention that some people accused one another for their own profit.⁶⁰² The Witch Museum audio performance, as described in Chapter Two, includes sound effects of crowds heckling the judge and jury at Rebecca Nurse's trial.⁶⁰³

Docents could bring these narrative elements into closer conversation with each other. For instance, given that tour guides already utilize the opening narration to

⁶⁰² Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁰³ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

introduce the idea of Massachusetts as a colony under stress, they could add a few sentences about how the pressures of war, cultural and religious emphases on witches and the Devil as realities at work in New England, gendered pressures on young girls, and the psychological stresses identified by Demos might have brought to bear fits of bewitchment on the part of the afflicted and a readiness to encourage fears of a witchcraft conspiracy on the part of their communities. Rather than reducing the girls' roles in the witch trials to hormones or boredom, they could allow for a range of motivations among the girls, allowing for genuine belief in the proceedings, willful deceptions, and possible collusion in some cases. In turn, rather than minimizing the role of magistrates and making only a brief reference to other community members' use of the witch trials to pursue their own interests, docents could address how, with their own mix of self-interest and sincere belief in witchcraft, ministers, magistrates, and leading men of the town like Thomas Putnam might have utilized the girls' bewitchments to achieve their own ends. The use of audio effects could also underscore the chaos that reigned in many of the examinations as spectators, magistrates, accusers, and the accused faced each other in the courtroom, escalating the pressure on defendants and escalating the scale of the witch trials. The theatricality of the sound effects and scripts could convey a sense of the afflicted girls' interiority, the pressures imposed on them and that they imposed on others in court, and the general sense of upheaval at work in examinations. This might encourage visitors to gain a greater understanding of their role in the witch trials, and to view them as just one group among many in Salem who drove the witch trials forward,

rather than an ahistorical group of young women with essentialized negative traits who seemingly bear most or all of the responsibility for 1692.

Edutainment sites treat the women accused of witchcraft with sympathy built by emphasizing their frailty and physical vulnerability. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Witch Museum highlights John Proctor and George Burroughs as heroic resisters of the witchcraft hysteria, while Elizabeth Proctor appears as a vulnerable pregnant woman in need of her husband's protection, and Rebecca Nurse's deafness, age, and physical weakness define her narrative.⁶⁰⁴ Similarly, the Wax Museum identifies Bridget Bishop as socially weak and unpopular due to her sexual reputation; panels denote Elizabeth Proctor as "pregnant Elizabeth Proctor," whose condition is the only reason why she escapes the gallows; the child Dorcas Good appears only as a traumatized girl – physically her figure collapses and is bodily led out of prison – never able to recover from the "hysteria."⁶⁰⁵ The tableau wax figurine representing Rebecca Nurse really just depicts her corpse being dug up and carried away for burial by her son; they, not she, take action in the museum's interpretation of the witch trials, she is just a body acted upon by others.⁶⁰⁶

The women's individuality does not appear in the interpretation. The Witch History Museum goes further by nearly erasing accused women in favor of centering accused men like Giles Corey, George Philip English, or most notably, according to a tour guide in 2016, George Burroughs.⁶⁰⁷ The only women included in the audio and

⁶⁰⁴ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁰⁵ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶⁰⁶ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶⁰⁷ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016.

docent narration are the initial afflicted girls, the enslaved Tituba and Candy, discussed below, who are framed as conniving perpetrators rather than victims, and Bridget Bishop. The docents and recorded narration do not interpret Bishop as an individual like they do Burroughs or Corey, but rather refer to accusations of familiars to illustrate some of the particular beliefs colonists had about witchcraft.⁶⁰⁸ Accused white women essentially act as nameless victims upon which others act, serving as props illustrating the horrific nature of the afflicted girls and Puritan zeal. With the exception of Sarah Wilde, who in the Wax Museum's interpretation curses the judges on the gallows, these accused women face their trials passively.⁶⁰⁹ The women who drive the action are really the accusers and afflicted, and the bifurcation between them and the meeker accused women further codes female agency and power as a suspicious source of disorder.

The Witch Dungeon offers more potential in centering women's agency in the face of accusations against them. For the first half of their visit to the museum, visitors sit and listen to an adaptation of court transcriptions in which an accused woman argues with and defends herself against her accuser. This affords one of the few instances across the edutainment attractions in which female victims "speak" and exhibit some individual personalities and abilities. Interpreters here could interrogate gender and other systemic factors as the framing for the plays, thereby granting individual identities to the victims of the witch trials and critically engaging a complex colonial world that led to their convictions.⁶¹⁰ This interplay between context and individual agency could also inform

⁶⁰⁸ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁰⁹ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶¹⁰ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

interpretation of prison experiences and underpin a more nuanced explanation of the witch trials as a whole in the guided tour of the “dungeon.” However, in the existing interpretation, these reenactments seem disconnected from the rest of the interpretation, and the potential to recover particular women’s experiences gets lost. As noted above, the opening exhibit panels focus mostly on the conniving bewitched girls, Tituba, John Indian, or on male actors like John Proctor or John Alden. The female victims of the witch trials get reduced to a list of reasons they were accused, like having a child out of wedlock or getting accused by a family member.⁶¹¹ The tour of the recreated jail and Salem street scenes similarly focuses on the accusers, centers the heroics of men like Giles Corey, and frames its interpretation of life in prison for maximum shock value without much attention to the individuals themselves, dwelling instead on descriptions of torture and other unmodern punishments like stints in the stocks.⁶¹² Because the rest of the interpretation seems designed for sensationalism, otherizing the past and those who lived through the witch trials to maximize visitors’ horror and alienation, the potential to engage with the accused women through their experiences in court is never realized. Without sustained interest in these women as people or critical interpretation of them, their stories appear more as a distancing illustration of bizarre witchcraft superstitions such as having a familiar, singing the Devil’s book, or shapeshifting into an animal. Again, the women themselves appear more as narrative tools illustrating a larger point

⁶¹¹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶¹² Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

about the oddity of colonial superstitions and the darkness of the past than as individual victims of the hysteria.

In a few places, edutainment sites point to the ways in which non-normative feminine behavior might have led to the sort of poor fame that made women vulnerable to suspicions of witchcraft. The Wax Museum, for instance, includes a tableau for Bridget Bishop. Its interpretive panel identifies her as “‘Lusty’ Bridget Bishop,” adding that had been married four times and had a “low reputation.”⁶¹³ Similarly, the Witch Dungeon displays a sign listing the reasons why some women might have been suspected witches. Some of these women appeared suspicious for seemingly sinister happenstances – Rebecca Nurse’s neighbor died of an illness, Susannah Martin supposedly did not get wet after stepping in a puddle – but others were accused for being a smoker or having a child out of wedlock.⁶¹⁴ In these cases, acting outside the norms of traditional femininity was apparently sufficient for their neighbors to believe they could be in league with the Devil. However, the signage at these sites list these potentially transgressive behaviors without integrating them into a larger social commentary on misogyny and gender expectations in shaping insider/outsider status and social vulnerability in the colonial era. Highlighting misogynistic acts and beliefs without treating them as worthy of narrative sensation normalizes gender inequality. Visitors are seemingly expected to understand or take for granted that seventeenth-century society oppressed women without unpacking the particularities of colonial constructions of gender or finding such disparities necessary

⁶¹³ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶¹⁴ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

to really engage. The fact that these attractions have elements of misogyny embedded in their narratives but focus much more on economic or racial social disruptions as sources of horror suggests the degree to which Americans internalize gender-related violence as the way in which the world works. While sad, the deaths and imprisonment of mostly female victims seemingly evokes less shock and dismay than greed or neighborly grudges as a motive for making witchcraft accusations.

Critically, assumptions about gender, morality, and constructions of victimhood are racialized. Even in the cases of relatively quarrelsome or transgressive women like Sarah Good or Bridget Bishop, interpreters and audiences take for granted that none of the accused women engaged in witchcraft. Sometimes docents will issue a blanket statement that “there were no real witches in Salem” and subsequently threaten the innocence of the white women of the charges against them as an obvious given.⁶¹⁵ By contrast, edutainment sites reify erroneous portrayals of women of color as actually engaging in magical tricks and tales, despite the fact that many of these associations were scurrilous and entered treatments of 1692 only after the fact.⁶¹⁶ Their treatment will be discussed in more detail below. The framing and shock value of particular women’s suffering seems to be graded according to their social positionality. Convictions of good housewives like Elizabeth Proctor appear as shocking instances of excess while the executions of troublesome women like Bridget Bishop appear tragic but not unexpected

⁶¹⁵ Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶¹⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

given their behavior. Women of color do not receive much or any recognition as victims at all.⁶¹⁷ As will be discussed below, their positionality made them especially dangerous perpetrators, not especially vulnerable in a white patriarchal society that denied them legal personhood or social value.

Popular discourses of women bringing violence upon themselves through “bad” behavior, being too overtly sexual, or being too outspoken, permeate interpretations of 1692. Salem’s tourist venues highlight how transgressive behavior might have contributed to victimization, but by failing to provide thoughtful context and critique, they reinforce misogynistic assumptions that female victims “ask for it” or that unruly women should suffer as a result of their actions.⁶¹⁸ The treatments of women like Bishop seem particularly punitive when compared to the more extensive portrayals of traditional wives and mothers like Elizabeth Proctor or Rebecca Nurse, whose accusations operate as shorthand for the shocking and egregious nature of the Salem Witch Crisis, or when read against the portrayals of accused men, discussed below, who occupy a disproportionate amount of narrative attention for the heroic masculine virtue and rationality that apparently led the afflicted girls to target them and tear them down with their accusations.⁶¹⁹ The framing and briefer, more off-hand treatment of transgressive

⁶¹⁷ Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶¹⁸ Courtney Fraser, “From ‘Ladies First’ to ‘Asking for It’: Benevolent Sexism in the Maintenance of Rape Culture,” *California Law Review* 103 (February 2015), 149, 158-160.

⁶¹⁹ Salem Witch Village, August 2018.; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

women suggests that their experiences are more expected, less interesting, and less horrific to the audience than the deaths of “good” men and women in 1692.

An edutainment format could still engage misogyny as an element in the Salem Witch Trials. For instance, the Witch Village and Witch Museum docents walk visitors through histories of “the witch” as a cultural archetype, while the Witch Dungeon and Witch History Museum include segments providing background on the trials and Puritan religion. Both of these script formats could easily add a line or two about what people actually believed about who witches were and how they could be identified, how this led people to believe women in particular became witches, and finally how this led to accusations against particular women in Salem. A guide on a site visit to the Salem Witch Museum in 2019 did refer to the *Malleus Maleficarum* as “sexist” in the context of the Middle Ages, however, although she did not connect this explicitly to subsequent constructions of the witch in the West beyond the fact that women tended to be accused in greater numbers than men.⁶²⁰ This connection could be made explicit with an additional few lines in the docent script.

Including more direct explanations of misogyny and gendered expectations in their narration might also facilitate incorporating individual female victims of the witch trials more fully, and more actively, into tour scripts. For instance, the Witch History Museum tableau and audio recording’s interpretation of Bridget Bishop’s trial could be reframed. As it stands, the narration announces that a scene represents Bridget Bishop and then enumerates the particular bits of evidence against her to explain things like what

⁶²⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September 2019.

a familiar is. Instead, the narrator could include a few lines about who Bridget Bishop was and how, specifically, she came to be accused. They could also incorporate snippets of dialogue from court transcripts responding to these charges. Sites like the Witch Museum could modify Rebecca Nurse's courtroom scene to include excerpts in her voice responding to the magistrates, instead of rendering her a mute figurine in museum displays. At the Wax Museum, rather than reducing Bishop to "lustful Bridget Bishop" with no further commentary, docents, audio, or panels could frame her reputation in a causal way for raising witchcraft suspicions. Even if docents and audio elements do not dismantle patriarchy in a thorough, academic way, they might still use storytelling and horror to narrate the pressure and suffering engendered by it. Drawing on scholarship, guides could demonstrate how gender norms made women subject to outright violence and social ostracism.

The sites' unwillingness to engage misogyny and patriarchy is especially apparent at the Witch Village and the Witch Museum's *Witches: Evolving Perceptions* exhibit which address the evolution of the witch as a cultural figure from prehistory to the present. *Evolving Perceptions* opens with a tableau of a "wise woman" who, along with her female ancestors and descendants, offered care as midwives and healers.⁶²¹ They were "strong women" respected for their skills in pre-Christian Europe, aligned with nature and a mother-goddess. From there, the tour jumps to a figure of the Wicked Witch of the West representing modern witches. The guides in 2016, 2018, and 2019 explained

⁶²¹ Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

the jump from positive wise woman to Hollywood crone as a result of early modern political, economic, and religious turbulence leading to the need for a scapegoat. The prerecorded narration, voiced in the style of the Wizard of Oz character, states that she used to be revered as a healer and was turned into a symbol of evil by the church and subsequent pop cultural treatments. The guide explains the influence of print culture and texts like the *Malleus Maleficarum* in stoking fears of heretical witchcraft and its treatment under the law. A final tableau of modern Wiccans outlines the practice's basic beliefs – affinity with nature, doing no harm, and gender equality – and asks guests to “look beyond the stereotype.” To wrap up the tour, the guide points to a wall illustrating contemporary witch hunts against groups like Japanese-Americans in World War II, communists during the Red Scare, and LGBTQ people amidst the AIDS crisis.⁶²² In demonstrating that the witch stereotype evolved, however, the guides elided the role of gender in shaping why the witch in particular emerged in these particular forms as scapegoats for societal fears.

Similarly, the Witch Village traces the evolution of “the witch” from prehistoric male shamans who used sympathetic magic to care for his community to the medieval wise woman who lived in close connection with the natural world, for instance by providing herbal remedies and health care to her community. Doctors approved by the church, according to the Witch Village, did not care to have their business stolen by these women and launched a smear campaign against them by associating their work with the Devil. From there, the tour jumps to contemporary Wicca. The guide explains that

⁶²² Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

“witch” applies to all practitioners regardless of gender and that their practices are based in the natural world for peaceful purposes.⁶²³

These attractions attempt to push back on the sinister “hag” stereotype of the witch by centering the idea of a benevolent midwife-witch. However, they fail to delve into the misogyny embedded in the formulation of the early modern witch archetype, even when explicitly interpreting the evolution of “the witch.” The tours also attempted to reframe elements of the witch stereotype, albeit anachronistically, as positive aspects of the wise woman’s role as a caretaker. For instance, according to a Witch Village tour guide in 2018, the witch’s cauldron might have stemmed from their use in preparing remedies, and the use of broomsticks in acts of sympathetic magic could have been reframed as diabolical in nature.⁶²⁴ The idea that women could not access the medical profession due to their gender and subsequently suffered persecution when they threatened doctors’ bottom line points to misogyny, but the narrative emphasis of the tour guide on how practices associated with healing made them appear odd could allow visitors to walk away believing that witchcraft accusations had to do with general strangeness in a way that was unconnected to gender performance. At *Evolving Perceptions*, neither the recorded narration nor guides in 2016, 2018, and 2019 explicitly named sexism as a reason for the stereotypes attached to pop cultural depictions of the witch or in creating the early modern imaginings of covens.⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Salem Witch Village, August 2018.

⁶²⁴ Salem Witch Village, August 2018.

⁶²⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

This unwillingness to directly address patriarchy or sexism even while actively deconstructing misogynistic stereotypes perhaps reflects a cultural ambivalence and outright distaste for feminism. Since the 1980s, many Americans have viewed gender inequality as past, constructing feminism as unnecessary, too extreme, too hysterical, and too disruptive to families and the gender status quo. The presence of women – let alone overt anti-misogynist discourse – appears aggressive.⁶²⁶ The mission statement for the Witch Museum is to be a voice for “the innocent,” and to encourage visitors to be vigilant against such an injustice taking place in the future.⁶²⁷ Yet interpreters privilege some visitors’ presumed discomfort with feminism and discussions of male privilege over any need to grapple with gender-based violence or unpack the witch’s continued cultural currency as a discursive tool in contemporary political discourse.⁶²⁸ Given the persistence of gender inequality and the intensity of men’s rights activism, particularly post-2016, explicitly raising the issue of misogyny seems central to the Witch Museum’s purported

⁶²⁶ Alison Dahl Crossley, *Finding Feminism: Millennial Activists and the Unfinished Gender Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 4-5. Michael L. Ferguson, “Choice Feminism and the Fear of Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (March 2010), 247-253; Marjorie Jolles, “Going Rogue: Postfeminism and the Privilege of Breaking the Rules,” *Feminist Formations* 24 (Winter 2012), 43-44; Rebecca Ann Lind, and Colleen Salo, “The Framing of Feminists and Feminism in News and Public Affairs Programs in U.S. Electronic Media,” *Journal of Communication* 52 (March 2002), 218. Janet K. Swim, Kathryn J. Aikin, Wayne S. Hall, Barbara A Hunter, “Sexism and Racism: Old-fashioned and Modern Prejudices,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68 (1995), 199–214; Daniella Paquette, “Sexism is over, according to most men,” *The Washington Post* August 22, 2016, accessed online; Shauna Pomerantz, Rebecca Raby, and Andrea Stefanik, “Girls Run the World? Caught Between Sexism and Postfeminism in School,” *Gender and Society* 27 (April 2013), 185-186.

⁶²⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶²⁸ For instance, see: Erin Cassese, “A political history of the term ‘witch-hunt,’” *Vox*, October 31, 2018, accessed online; Sady Doyle, “Monsters, Men, and Magic: Why Feminists Turned to Witchcraft to Oppose Trump,” *The Guardian* August 7, 2019, accessed online; Jamie Ehrlich, “Salem Mayor on Trump’s claims about witch trial due process: ‘Learn your history,’” *CNN*, December 18, 2019, accessed online; Noel King, “Lindy West: ‘The Witches Are Coming – And They’re Rightfully Angry,’” *National Public Radio*, November 11, 2019, accessed online; Sam Wolfson, “Cursed: Witches Are Planning a Public Hexing of Brett Kavanaugh,” *The Guardian* October 16, 2018, accessed online.

mission.⁶²⁹ Asking guests to look “beyond the stereotype” will not go far if they are not also asked to examine why the clichés exist in the first place.⁶³⁰

While associations between midwives and witchcraft accusations have been long disproven, the interpretation could perhaps reframe some of these tableaux to include more explicit discussions of feminism. Engaging the feminist reclaiming of “the witch” and the misogynistic elements in her overall cultural construction could allow guides to unpack continuities in patriarchy and its challengers across historical periods and inequities in the present. Asking visitors to think about the reclaiming of the witch seems particularly important given that this empowering reframing extends only to white Euro-American traditions. As of 2019, voodoo and people of color appear only as sinister in the main interpretation across edutainment sites.⁶³¹ This points to a general lack of awareness or concern among white people for the harm inflicted by the cultural and actual violence of white supremacy on people of color. It also perpetuates racist stereotyping of Black spiritual practices in a context purpose-built to engage how perceptions of witchcraft evolve or get used in the sense of a modern “witch hunt” to marginalize communities for the benefit of those in power. Integrating a more intersectional feminist analysis of evolving perceptions of the witch would again allow for stronger thematic connections between the past and present in a way that could

⁶²⁹ “Male Supremacy,” Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/male-supremacy>; “When Women Are the Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy,” Anti-Defamation League, <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/when-women-are-the-enemy-the-intersection-of-misogyny-and-white-supremacy>

⁶³⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶³¹ Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018; Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

confront visitors with their own positionality and perhaps challenge them to face their complacency with racist and misogynistic narratives associated with witchcraft. Instead, the idea of Black or indigenous women exerting agency and command of the supernatural remains a threat to white visitors' complacency in white privilege.

Many of the souvenirs sold at these attractions and around Salem elide the misogyny at the heart of (early) modern constructions of the witch, trafficking instead in varieties of "witch kitsch." "Kitsch" here follows Marita Sturken's definition as "as a particular mix of sentimental excess and irony, a naiveté as well as a knowing wink."⁶³² Although Sturken's *Tourists of History* concerns the much more recent tragedies of the Oklahoma City Bombing and 9/11, her contention that the commodification of history engendered by consumer goods, media images, and tourism allows visitors to view tragedy from a remove and retain a sense of "innocence" from underlying structural factors that might indict American exceptionalism, imperialism, and so on seems useful here.⁶³³ Similarly, Tiya Miles notes that commodifying troubling subjects like plantation slavery as "slavery kitsch" ultimately serves to "inoculate" visitors against emotion and contemplation by rendering enslaved people "comfortable," "objectified," and "consumable."⁶³⁴ In Salem, witchcraft souvenirs serve a similar purpose of hiding troubling notions at the heart of the Witch Trials like misogyny, colonialism, and legal

⁶³² Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, (Durham: Duke University, 2007), 18.

⁶³³ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 1-31.

⁶³⁴ Miles, *Tales*, 107.

violence under a veneer of familiar, cute cultural figures like stuffed dragons, Halloween decorations, and Dorothy and Toto.⁶³⁵

Many souvenirs deploy the traditional “hag” image as quaint and fun sort of spooky. The Witch Museum, for instance, has an entire section of Wizard of Oz merchandise, while other shops superimpose flying hags over slogans like “Have broom, will travel!”⁶³⁶ They also sell cute witch figures evocative of Samantha in *Bewitched* paired with girl power slogans. For instance, visitors can purchase “Girls’ night out!” martini glasses and hot pink t-shirts depicting a group of women perched on broomsticks (with cute dresses, high heels, and blown-out hair).⁶³⁷ Women can also buy t-shirts proclaiming themselves a “good,” “bad,” or “Wonder Witch” (emblazoned over Wonder Woman’s logo), a bedazzled “Kitchen Witch” shirt, “Women who behave badly seldom make history” souvenirs, or sweatshirts with a coven flying around on broomsticks over the words “Girls Just Want to Have Fun!”⁶³⁸ In Salem, profiting off of the most defanged clichés of girl-power without actually doing feminist work at Salem’s main attractions completely diminishes the misogyny at the heart of these images’ creation and by extension the cultural work that could be done through the lens of witch history.

⁶³⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Coon’s Card and Gift Shop, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶³⁶ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Coon’s Card and Gift Shop, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶³⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Coon’s Card and Gift Shop, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶³⁸ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Coon’s Card and Gift Shop, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Witch Tees, <https://witchteessalem.com/product/girls-night-out-tee/>

Critically, again, this reclaiming of the witch as a figure of fun, as basically harmless, is only extended to white figures and Euro-American markers of identity.⁶³⁹

The use of “witch” to signify actual people in 1692, supernatural monsters, early modern fears, and contemporary wiccans can be difficult to parse, but putting commodified “fun” witches taken straight from the misogynistic imagery and beliefs that led to the deaths visitors just learned about and are supposed to commemorate effaces the identities and personhood of women who died in 1692.⁶⁴⁰ Actual women become conflated with the supernatural and horrific while markers of misogyny are reframed as fun and benign, not to be taken seriously in 1692 or now. Souvenirs don’t include images of male witches, allowing their deaths in 1692 to retain a gravity and frightfulness not afforded to female victims. This, combined with the downplaying of misogyny in interpretation, makes violence against women appear less serious or at least less shocking. As a result, their suffering becomes easier to compartmentalize and commercialize.

White Men

Although interrogating the role of patriarchy in its full classed, gendered, aged, and religious sense is not particularly within the purview of an edutainment attraction, it could, as discussed above, do more work to make the role of misogyny more explicit in shaping seventeenth-century constructions of witchcraft and in steering particular

⁶³⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Coon’s Card and Gift Shop, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁴⁰ Souvenirs, kitsch, and commodification of death defines most of the existing literature on Salem tourism and so will only be touched upon here. See Hill, “Salem as Witch City”; DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*.

accusations. They could make more explicit connections between misogynistic constructions of “the witch” as archetype and gendered access to institutional power in docent narration. At sites like the Witch Village and Witch Museum, docents and audio exhibits claim that “men of the church” feared the influence of women like midwives and demonized them as witches to eliminate them as rivals for influence and highlight misogynistic characteristics in witchcraft imagery (although they do not use the word “misogyny”).⁶⁴¹ Docents could connect these ideas in ways that at least makes patriarchy and the violence it engendered visible by reframing this evolution as the result of men in a misogynistic culture having disproportionate access to religious, social, and legal authority that allowed them to shape constructions of witchcraft as well as its actual prosecution. This explanation could be reinforced by referencing specific examples of these dynamics from 1692, particularly at the Witch Museum, which narrates the course of events in 1692 before examining the witch archetype.

Edutainment attractions could also make gendered violence in Puritan culture, and the witch trials specifically, legible by complicating portrayals of male witchcraft victims. Tour scripts currently deploy accused men – Giles Corey, George Burroughs, Philip English, and John Proctor – as heroic figures who distill normative white masculine traits. Guides and theatrical audio embellishments build narratives around these men actively resisting the charges against them through strong wills and moral fortitude, possessing financial success, and maintaining their reason in the face of general

⁶⁴¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch Village, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

chaos, and often characterize them as physically strong and brave. Edutainment sites like the Witch Village, Witch History Museum, and Witch Dungeon all stress the physical endurance of Giles Corey, for instance, describing how he held out under pressing for two days as an ever increasing amount of weight crushed his chest. Presented hourly with the chance to enter a plea and end the torture, he taunted Corwin and his agents to add more weight.⁶⁴² The Witch History Museum also describes Burroughs as being particularly known for his strength; one scene on the tour depicts him being physically dragged out of his home in chains by numerous struggling lawmen at his arrest. He went to his death with stoicism, reciting prayers and giving speeches that convinced many of those present for the execution of his innocence.⁶⁴³

George Burroughs, Giles Corey, and Philip English are also praised for accumulating wealth, property, or status as a minister coveted by others in the community.⁶⁴⁴ Corey died to preserve his descendants' inheritance while English, according to the Witch History Museum, returned to Salem and set about re-acquiring his lost property, even holding the body of the corrupt Sheriff Corwin hostage until the sheriff's family returned his stolen property to him.⁶⁴⁵ Emphasizing male moral fortitude and leadership in building a modern Salem allows interpreters to integrate 1692 in a triumphalist narrative in which great white men of the town stopped superstition in New

⁶⁴² Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁴³ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁴⁴ Salem Witch Village, August 2018; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶⁴⁵ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

England for good and ushered in a new age of reason and prosperity. This creates a new lineage for Salem; its fathers are not so much the judges who led the witch trials but merchants and men of reason like Philip English.

The Witch Dungeon and Witch Museum raise the issue of patriarchal violence in their interpretation of John Proctor but frame it as positive, evidence of his rationality and a necessary corrective for youthful female hysterics. One exhibit panel at the Witch Dungeon singles out John Proctor as the most outspoken against the injustices of the witch trials, framing him as a hero, before relating that he once said that he believed using a “cudgel on the girls’ bottoms would be an effective way of dealing with them” and that he would beat Tituba and John Indian if he could.⁶⁴⁶ Similarly, the 1692 audio exhibit at the Witch Museum introduces Proctor as an outspoken voice of reason, refusing to go along with the hysteria and openly denouncing the trials. The narrator describes how when a servant in his household claimed to be afflicted, he spanked her, at which point she stopped professing herself bewitched.⁶⁴⁷ The historical interpretation outrightly presents physical violence against one’s dependents as a positive force for order. These tour scripts construct Proctor as a champion of reason because he, a white man, would have been willing to use force to assert patriarchal dominance over girls and people of color. Had more men been allowed to inflict that patriarchal dominance, the Witch Dungeon implies, the witch trials would not have happened.

⁶⁴⁶ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁴⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019

In fact, men's reputations for anger, getting into fights, and abusing dependents – family members, servants, and hired laborers of a lower social class – may have been a contributing factor in witchcraft accusations, as discussed in Chapter Two.⁶⁴⁸ Interpreters could make this kind of violence and its direct connections to witchcraft cases visible in their tours. An interpretive panel on Giles Corey at the Wax Museum makes the most significant mention of violence on the part of an accused witch. The text informs visitors that he had a well-earned reputation for violence and criminal behavior. However, interpretation separates this part of his biography from accusations of witchcraft, noting that he had committed many misdeeds, but that these did not include witchcraft.⁶⁴⁹ The text could make the connection between these points explicit. Elsewhere, the Witch Museum and Witch History Museum incorporate tableaux of George Burroughs' arrest and execution, but do not mention why the afflicted girls accused him or why the community around them might have given credence to their claims. Cotton Mather wrote that Burroughs' reputation for “the barbarous usage of his two successive wives” was known throughout Essex county, and that his neighbors cited his treatment of his wives in their depositions. Several of the afflicted girls claimed to have supernatural knowledge that Burroughs had murdered his wives, with Ann Putnam Jr. even claiming that the ghosts of his late wives appeared to her to gain retribution against their killer.⁶⁵⁰ The lack of explanation for Burroughs' identification as a witch suggests that the afflicted children just happened to accuse a minister, illustrative in the museums' narratives only of how far

⁶⁴⁸ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 128-130, 154; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 147-150. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 36-93.

⁶⁴⁹ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶⁵⁰ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 149-150.

the afflicted children reached with their accusations to denounce a man of God; the Witch Museum even includes a voiceover of Burroughs reciting the Lord's Prayer as the narrator describes his execution.⁶⁵¹ Even in Proctor's case, villagers heard him boast about beating Tituba and John Indian, and would refer to Mary Warren, the servant edutainment attractions praise him for beating, as his "jade," meaning a sexually loose woman. As Baker notes, "it is a rather odd way for a married sixty-year-old father of eleven to refer to his twenty-year-old servant, especially when that servant would later testify that she saw Proctor's specter and pull it down into her lap," possibly indicating coercive relationship between the two. Thus, edutainment museums could at least raise the issue of gendered violence, as well as its pervasiveness in the seventeenth century, by embedding it throughout museum interpretation, building from contextual understandings of "the witch" to the ability of Corey, Proctor, Burroughs, and others to inflict violence on their dependents without immediate consequence. As public history scholar Debra Reid notes, traditional museum attractions like historic house museums – which also populate much of Salem's witchcraft tourist landscape – tend to elide histories of domestic abuse.⁶⁵² However, given the degree to which it might have played a role in witchcraft accusations and the overall tone of fright, edutainment attractions could raise it as a historical issue and frame victims' inability to redress it as a source of tragedy and horror.

⁶⁵¹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁵² Reid, "Making Gender Matter," 81.

Tituba

The Witch History Museum's interpretation posits that the greatest threat to an orderly society came from Tituba, supposedly a Black woman who brought terrifying stories and magic into the Parris household, corrupted white children, accused innocent white women, and ignited a witch craze. The site depicts her as a perverse Mammy figure to emphasize the disruption of gender and racial order. She sits in a kitchen surrounded by the children she was supposed to be caring for telling frightening stories in caricatured African accents. The narration in the Witch History Museum even has her telling the children outright that they're damned as girls' crying plays in the background. Visitors are told that female domestic duties were left up to Tituba. However, whenever Samuel Parris left the house, the girls under her care and others in the neighborhood would gather in his home. Tituba taught them magic, voodoo, and fortune telling and told them frightening stories. These terrifying tales from Barbados scared the girls into their hysterics.⁶⁵³ For white people, the mammy stereotype represents Black servility, maternal care, and the security of white supremacy.⁶⁵⁴ Had society been functioning normally in 1692, Tituba would have been minding the white girls under her care instead of agitating their fears and encouraging misbehavior. Instead of minding her place and the authority of the white male head of the household, serving the white family, she prepared These museums invert that stereotype to create an atmosphere of horror, of corruption from within the home, and an upending of hierarchy. This point is reinforced by narration

⁶⁵³ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁵⁴ See McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*.

suggesting that Tituba is able to cause mischief when the white patriarch, Samuel Parris, is physically absent from the home. The terror of 1692 therefore stems from a disruption of a racial and gendered social order. Strong white patriarchal control is shown as necessary for social stability and the natural way of organizing relationships of power.

The source of supernatural terror came from without white society in the form of “voodoo” and a Black woman. The inherent threat of Blackness is further emphasized at the Witch History Museum on a 2016 site visit by using the examination of another Black enslaved woman named Candy as its example of witchcraft proceedings and false witchcraft accusations, in this case against her owner, Mrs. Hawkes. A voice actress reads a statement by Candy that she had been made a witch by Mrs. Hawkes. The narration then states that Candy and Tituba came from Barbados and practiced voodoo. Candy was released but Mrs. Hawkes, her owner, went to jail as an accused witch.⁶⁵⁵ The dynamics of racism and enslavement that determined Candy’s treatment under the law are ignored. Instead, visitors learn that yet another Black woman actually practiced witchcraft while an “innocent” white woman paid the price for it. The white men and women who also entered accusations, testified as afflicted persons, and exerted actual power over legal and political bodies are de-emphasized or not depicted at all in the interpretation.⁶⁵⁶ Singling out Black women as being peculiarly culpable in this way mitigates white guilt and again emphasizes the need for white supremacy as a means of maintaining an orderly society. Visitors should not question the law, politics, or religious

⁶⁵⁵ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016.

⁶⁵⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

decisions and power structures created by white men, instead they should be horrified at their usurpation by girls and Black women.

The Salem Wax Museum follows a similar vein, offering up the witch trials as an instance of racialized horror. Exhibit displays frame their tour as a remembrance of “ignorance, intolerance, and prejudice” against “those who suffer persecution,” yet single out Tituba, the only woman of color (represented by a Black mannequin), as a witch and the instigator of the witch trials. In the tableau introducing her, she waits outside a room as afflicted girls enter accusations against her and is named as “Tituba, The Witch!”⁶⁵⁷ According to the display, she confessed to witchcraft in order to save herself. This contrasts with the white women like Rebecca Nurse, Elizabeth Howe, or Sarah Wild who refused and went to their deaths. Her stories and false confession “inspired” the afflicted girls to ignite a witch craze.⁶⁵⁸ By naming her as a witch and framing Tituba’s confession as self-interested strategy and as stories of her own invention, the role of Anglo-American beliefs in witchcraft and systemic oppression of enslaved persons is ignored and magic is once again located beyond white society. Indeed, the interpretive panel title is “Tituba the Witch!” which suggests that witchcraft was somehow a part of her identity rather than an imposition by English colonists who imposed their own cultural understandings on her.⁶⁵⁹ When read against the concluding panel about remembering those who suffer persecution as victims of intolerance, the vilification of Tituba suggests that real intolerance and victimhood status belong to white people. Systemic ignorance,

⁶⁵⁷ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶⁵⁸ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

⁶⁵⁹ Salem Wax Museum, August 2018.

prejudice, and intolerance leading to colonial violence against those like Tituba evidently do not merit consideration. Instead, Tituba appears to invite the harm done against her with her conniving actions and witchcraft, positioning white people as the victims of their own colonial and racial systems of power. White visitors can conclude the tour without having to examine how their own internalized racism relates to 1692 or present-day injustice.

Tituba and John Indian play a smaller, somewhat contradictory role in interpretations at the Witch Dungeon. Before viewing a reimagining of a witch trial, visitors may view a few interpretive panels placed around the performance space that firmly blame Tituba for being an actual witch and instigating the hysterics of the afflicted children. According to one panel, Tituba, the “Black slave” is “usually” blamed for starting the Salem Witch Trials.⁶⁶⁰ According to another, she and her husband John Indian “loved to talk about the devil and his powers” around the initial afflicted girls, and indeed one might wonder if they were “really bewitched by Tituba’s tales or did Tituba feed them hard cider or narcotics brought to Salem from the West Indies?”⁶⁶¹ The interpretation also mentions her on a list of reasons why particular women attracted witchcraft accusations. For the white women on the list, the reasons mark them as social outsiders in some way, for instance noting that one woman had given birth to an illegitimate child while another was a beggar. In Tituba’s case, the interpretation states that she “readily admitted to witchcraft.”⁶⁶² In this way, the Witch Dungeon leads visitors

⁶⁶⁰ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁶¹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁶² Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

to believe that Tituba might have actually been a witch, along with her husband John Indian. According to the panel introducing him, witch cakes, an Anglo-American act of counter-magic, were “John Indian’s” and it was he who “called them” witch cakes.⁶⁶³ This formulation blames people of color, outsiders to English society, for importing actual magical acts and stoking fears of the devil in Salem’s children, sparking their afflictions. Although other panels explain that everyone in New England believed in witches, these suggest that the actual witches in Salem and any acts of magic that took place came from outside white communities and Anglo-American culture.⁶⁶⁴ In doing so, they appear as a perverse Mammy stereotype, corrupting the children under their care and potentially drugging them into fits of supposed bewitchment.

Much of the horror of 1692 comes from a breakdown of racist power dynamics. As noted above, the Witch Dungeon evokes an atmosphere of absolute horror, emphasizing the injustice of a witch trial, dwelling on the physical tortures inflicted on prisoners, the malicious violence of seventeenth-century Salemites, and magic practiced by the only people of color identified in the interpretation.⁶⁶⁵ By opening their interpretation in this way, a sense of fright, superstition, and violence is established in large part through the presence of (supposedly) Black and Native persons. Instead of comforting and caring for white children and remaining contentedly servile to white people, they manipulated the girls in their charge into accusing innocent white people in the community. This positions people of color as dangerous interlopers into white spaces

⁶⁶³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁶⁴ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁶⁵ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

and naturalizes white supremacy as a means of organizing power relations. This also completely elides the violence of colonialism. Instead of interpreting the ability of white colonists to command the labor and bodies of people of color or the role that these dynamics have played in scapegoating Tituba and John Indian in subsequent interpretations of 1692, these interpretive panels suggest that the threat of Atlantic colonization was posed by Native and Black individuals against their oppressors (who do not actually appear as oppressive in this interpretation).

At the same time, the introductory speeches for visits in 2016, 2018, and 2019 offering some context for the trial performance did not mention her at all, nor did the guide to the “dungeon” portion of the attraction interpret her at all in 2018.⁶⁶⁶ In 2019, the interpreter did mention Tituba, explaining that she likely had come from Massachusetts not the Caribbean, and therefore could not have had any knowledge of voodoo as is usually claimed. Where these stories came from and why so much blame might have been placed on her, a woman of color, she did not know.⁶⁶⁷ A 2016 tour included some discussion of a tableau depicting Tituba, John Indian, and Betty Parris and Abigail Williams in the throes of their convulsions. The guide only identified Tituba as “a slave” and the first woman accused of witchcraft, confessing only under torture to acts that the Puritans considered Black magic. Again, however, the guide suggests that she did practice various tricks and acts of fortune telling, she just was not a witch.⁶⁶⁸ Interpretation at the Witch Dungeon does push back against constructions of Tituba as

⁶⁶⁶ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁶⁷ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2019.

⁶⁶⁸ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016.

the instigator of the witch trials in this way, but in doing so they rob her of agency in rendering her purely a sympathetic victim. This is underscored by the interpretation in which actresses perform adaptations of court records from white women's trials. White women "speak" in the attraction's interpretation, actively defend themselves or enter charges against others, and are shown to display intelligence and strategy both as defendants and accusers.⁶⁶⁹ This interpretive gap reinforces notions that Black women are held to a higher standard of behavior in order to be considered true victims rather than somehow inviting harm done to them.⁶⁷⁰ Perhaps she must also appear as entirely powerless in order to appear as non-threatening or non-suspect to white audiences.

The interpreter on a visit to the Witch Dungeon in 2019 pushed back a little bit more on characterizations of Tituba as a voodoo-practicing menace to white children, but in a way that completely denied the existence of racism in these characterizations of her. Visitors learned that witchcraft documents had been re-examined and that it seems likely that Tituba actually came from Massachusetts, not the Caribbean, and therefore could not have actually known voodoo.⁶⁷¹ As Elaine Breslaw notes, nineteenth-century histories of Salem witchcraft raised and then dismissed the possibility of Tituba's being Wampanoag, who New Englanders sometimes sold into slavery in the Caribbean. Scholarship since Chadwick Hansen's 1974 article "The Metamorphosis of Tituba, or Why American Intellectuals Can't Tell an Indian Witch from a Negro" has largely agreed that came from

⁶⁶⁹ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁷⁰ Kali Nicole Gross, "African American Women, Mass Incarceration, and the Politics of Protection," *Journal of American History* 102 (June 2015), 25-33. Jamilia J. Blake and Rebecca Epstein, "Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias," Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity, 2019; accessed online.

⁶⁷¹ For analysis of Tituba's likely origins, see Breslaw, *Tituba*, 1-38.

an indigenous tribe in Central America.⁶⁷² For this reason, and apparently this reason only, characterizations of her as corrupting the white girls of her neighborhood with Caribbean magic probably are not true. Additionally, the guide did not correct the interpretive panels in the Witch Dungeon that identified Tituba as Black. According to the guide, how these stories of voodoo and blame came to be attached to Tituba is a bit of a mystery.⁶⁷³

Critically, this characterization does not categorically state that Tituba has been scapegoated for the Salem Witch Trials, that the charges leveled against her were embedded in Euro-American traditions anyway, or address why Tituba may have actually come under such quick suspicion instead. By merely stating that Tituba could not have practiced voodoo because she probably did not come from a region where it was practiced, the guide perpetuated racist white mischaracterizations of voodoo as a malicious magical practice akin to diabolic witchcraft instead of a syncretic religion.⁶⁷⁴ It also seems pretty clear why largely white writers and tourist boosters might have claimed that a woman they believed to be Black practiced voodoo and instigated the witchcraft crisis, but any genuine bewilderment by the guide and the visitors highlights the degree to which white privilege inhibits them from recognizing racism let alone challenging it or their own positionality. The failure of the Witch Dungeon to update its interpretive panels

⁶⁷² Hansen, "The Metamorphosis of Tituba," 3-12. See also Rosenthal, *Salem Story* and Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

⁶⁷³ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁷⁴ Bartkowski, "Claims-Making and Typifications," 559-579; Melissa L. Cooper, *Making Gullah: A History of Sapelo Islanders, Race, and the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 40-67; Morrow Long, "Perceptions of New Orleans Voodoo," 86-101.

or address racist caricaturizing insulates white visitors from confronting white privilege and white supremacy.

While the guide described Tituba largely as a passive victim on this tour, the guide described John Indian as brilliant and strategic for pretending to be afflicted alongside the children whenever his wife came near him to escape charges of witchcraft himself. Giles Corey's participation in the trial against his wife merited no similar discussion.⁶⁷⁵ Rhetorically, the only man of color appears in the same position as young girls. White men who also suffered afflictions did not appear in the interpretation. His failure as a husband was also noted and joked about by the visitors and the tour guide. This gap in racialized interpretations reinforce a devaluing of non-white men in popular culture and uphold white masculinity as the ideal expression of manliness.⁶⁷⁶ The tour guide did add, however, that as enslaved persons, John Indian and Tituba had few options for defending themselves against charges of witchcraft and knew that this status would make them particularly likely to be accused.⁶⁷⁷ Placing their actions inside a context of systemic inequality is critical for developing a socially responsible interpretive framework. At the same time, however, this interpretation appears idiosyncratic to the guide on any particular tour and is not connected to a broader social context, for instance the scale of slavery in New England its relationship to colonial warfare mentioned

⁶⁷⁵Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2019.

⁶⁷⁶ Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, "Introduction: Who's Walking with Our Brothers?" in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identity, Regeneration*, Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, eds. (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 4-6, 10-11.

⁶⁷⁷ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2019.

elsewhere in the tour or the relationship between social position and witchcraft accusations.

Overall, contemporary witch tourism emphasizes the innocence of those accused of witchcraft and tries to downplay accusations of capitalizing on tragedy by emphasizing that they teach visitors to never let “prejudice” and “scapegoating” happen again. At the same time though, sensational interest in witches and violence, ghost tours, horror fans, and an entire month of “Haunted Happenings” every October bringing in hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.⁶⁷⁸ The cultural work achieved by these sorts of events seems to mirror Michelle Brown’s analysis of haunted prison tourism, where she finds that tours built around prisoners’ “violence, pain, and death – via their ghosts” tend to make a “spectacle of cruel cultural fantasy” by failing to include prisoners’ voices, failing to interrogate power in a prison setting, and failing to articulate any particular meanings of imprisonment.⁶⁷⁹ In Tituba’s case especially, witchcraft attractions similarly decline to interrogate Tituba’s positionality, ultimately offering no avenue for tourists to engage with the consequences of colonialism and enslavement. Instead, as noted by Brown in her examination of prisons, travel boosters select elements of Tituba’s mythology that are the most conducive to sensationalism and supernatural thrills.⁶⁸⁰ In order to reconcile the need to commemorate the victims and draw people in with horror and sensationalism, attractions, marketing, and public programs again locate actual supernatural practices and genuine witchcraft in Tituba. An advertisement for the Wax Museum in the 2001 city

⁶⁷⁸ Hill, “Salem as Witch City,” 287-292; “Media Kit,” Salem, <https://www.salem.org/media-kit/>

⁶⁷⁹ Michelle Brown, *The Culture of Punishment: Prison, Society, and Spectacle* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 86-87.

⁶⁸⁰ Brown, *The Culture of Punishment*, 87.

visitor's guide invites tourists to "be prepared to come face to face with Tituba the witch," while a promotion in 1998's *Haunted Happenings* brochure asks visitors to "Stand eye to eye with Tituba...slave or witch?"⁶⁸¹ Thus the horror and the "fun" of witch stories for white audiences are maintained by suggesting that actual supernatural rites were – or could have been – carried out by Tituba, whose race is represented variously as Black or indigenous but always centered in her description. Tituba is thus alienated from other victims and from Massachusetts' society in general, an outsider who brought trouble with her instead of falling prey to forces within white New England society itself. This upholds white supremacy by presenting people of color as inherently suspicious, mystical, and prone to causing disorder if not controlled and commodifies Black and Native bodies for the entertainment of white audiences. White visitors are thus invited to reflect on the injustice done to white victims, seek to understand the past by treating the accused, afflicted, and authorities involved with seriousness and respect, but also relax and enjoy a thrill of supernatural terror in the figure of Tituba.

As Michelle Brown notes, "counter-hegemonic" tales are possible even at sites that involve the "commodification and trivialization of death and pain."⁶⁸² Edutainment attraction scripts could be improved by relying more on recent scholarship than a century of racist mythmaking. For instance, docents could explain Tituba's background and re-narrate the inciting incident of the Salem Witch Trials in the Parris household. The Witch Museum and Witch History Museum include tableaux of Tituba and the afflicted girls in

⁶⁸¹ *Salem Massachusetts Official Guidebook and Map* (Salem: Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, 2001), 21; "The Salem Wax Museum of Witches and Seafarers," *Haunted Happenings* (Salem: Salem Haunted Happenings Committee, 1998), n.p.

⁶⁸² Brown, *The Culture of Punishment*, 91.

the Parris family's kitchen already, and dwell on the girls' bizarre fits and adults' alarm.⁶⁸³ This moment could be reframed to emphasize Mary Sibley's role in ordering Tituba and John Indian to prepare a witch cake – the only act of magic attributed to this moment in the historical record. Docents could also explain how Tituba's ethnicity and enslaved status rendered her particularly suspect and vulnerable to abuse by the white Puritan community around her. The horror of 1692 could stem from the horror engendered by how quickly Salem residents turned on her, and their most vulnerable in general, instead of framing her status as a cultural outsider as a threat. In this way, edutainment attractions could still raise the issue of colonial violence even if it is not explicitly named and dismantled in the interpretation. As noted in Chapter Two, the Witch Museum's narration already directly connects Tituba's race to her scapegoating in 1692 in a sentence – there is no reason why other attractions couldn't make this connection explicit as well.⁶⁸⁴ At an absolute minimum, docent scripts and audio elements could stop repeating the inaccurate, racist caricatures that currently define her interpretation.

Native New England

With interpretive scripts that identify Tituba as Black at the Salem Witch Museum, the Witch History Museum, and the Witch Dungeon, the only references to indigenous peoples are now peripheral – they appear only as historical context for the

⁶⁸³ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁸⁴ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

witch trials as threatening interlopers into white spaces.⁶⁸⁵ The opening tableau at the Witch History Museum, for instance, depicts Native men yelling and lurking in the forest in front of a European-style home, narratively and visually threatening to white society.⁶⁸⁶ A visit to the Witch Dungeon reinforces this construction of Native Americans as a colonial danger lurking on the New England frontier, destabilizing white communities alongside disease and crop failures. By collapsing these stressors that might have contributed to tensions within Essex County that might have contributed to the outbreak of the witch trials, indigenous nations appear as inherently threatening and chaotic.⁶⁸⁷ This problem can be exacerbated by the particular direction taken by the tour guide. On a visit to the Witch Dungeon in 2016, for instance, the opening narrator emphasized the violence of frontier warfare – kidnappings and scalping in particular – that might have given colonists cases of PTSD, episodes of which appeared as bewitchment. She mentioned Native violence again later in the tour during a discussion of Giles Corey; he went to his death to protect his land as security for his family, given that there were “no supermarkets” back then but lots of “horrendous” attacks by indigenous persons. At the same time, however, she also denaturalized associations between fears of forests and dangerous landscapes, Native Americans, and the devil by explaining that this association was a colonial construct by white English settlers living on Native land.⁶⁸⁸ This is in contrast to the Witch Museum and Witch History Museum,

⁶⁸⁵ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁸⁶ Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁸⁷ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

⁶⁸⁸ Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016.

where the sinister framing of these connections for colonial New Englanders at the Witch Museum and Witch History Museum reifies indigenous persons as sources of terror and teases the possibility of such an association to create a horrific atmosphere.⁶⁸⁹ This at least positions New England as contested space with the colonists as the interlopers, but describing violence only on the part of indigenous nations belies the violence of European colonization and makes Native Americans appear as the really dangerous aggressors in this context. The guide on a visit in 2018 did not include even this pushback against sinister constructions of Native Americans; she opened her tour with a list of “problems” facing Salem in 1692 including raids, epidemics, crop failures, and, with a bit lengthier explanation, a loss of legal protection and governmental breakdown for eight years after the loss of Massachusetts’ charter.⁶⁹⁰ Again, Native Americans appear only as part of a laundry list of threats to orderly white society, contributing to chaos that could not be controlled without the governmental oversight of the charter. Ultimately, Native Americans appear less as people fully a part of United States history and more as a narrative device or shorthand for the past as a dangerous place.

Conclusion

As noted by scholars such as John Urry and Michelle Brown, the institutional venue of a museum construct tourists’ gaze by giving the past a “spatial dimension and [a] historical narrative that is selectively staged.”⁶⁹¹ Often, tourist boosters construct

⁶⁸⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁹⁰ Salem Witch Dungeon, August 2018.

⁶⁹¹ Brown, *The Culture of Punishment*, 98.

particular narratives to appeal to the existing expectations of tourists informed by other cultural forms like film, literature, and other forms of media.⁶⁹² The fantasies and preconceptions of tourists determine what they perceive as accurate, what they perceive as entertaining, and the ultimate satisfaction that they derive from the tour. According to Brown, “the structure and the design of tours...stretches towards an accurate historical record, but one which appeals to the...myths of the tourist.”⁶⁹³ According to curators and educators at the National Park Service and the Salem Witch Museum, the overwhelmingly white, middle-class tourists to Salem arrive believing in a colonial imaginary of the Witch Trials involving a mysterious Black woman and malicious, unruly girls, vanished Native Americans, and a brutal moment of violent excess disconnected from their lives and the institutions of the present.⁶⁹⁴ Thus, the narratives present at Salem’s edutainment attractions capitalize on these stereotypes to create an atmosphere of horror that will thrill and yet conform to audience expectations. The assemblage of museum genres at work in Salem’s for-profit edutainment attractions could advance narratives that build historical understanding of 1692’s most marginalized actors, but instead the interplay of entertainment with didactic museum forms then gives institutional validation to existing biases among white, middle-class Americans about Native Americans, women, and Black women, confirming them as historically founded.

⁶⁹² Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 6; Brown, *The Culture of Punishment*, 98.

⁶⁹³ Brown, *The Culture of Punishment*, 98.

⁶⁹⁴ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

Chapter Four

Myths and Misconceptions: “Real” History at Historic Sites and Non-Profits

Introduction

The Theatricality and heightened emotion seems to dominate popular understandings of Salem witchcraft. Non-profit attractions have sought to offer a counter-narrative de-sensationalizing the witch trials by centering scholarship in their interpretation to foster historical understanding of 1692. Indeed, the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, the Witch House, and the Essex National Heritage-Salem Maritime National Historic Site partnership consciously develop their interpretation to correct the misinformation about the trials and move away from the sexist and racist stereotyping that define popular understandings of 1692. The walking tour offered by Essex National Heritage even calls its walking tour the “Myths and Misconceptions Tour” and markets it as a fact-check for mainstream narratives about Salem witchcraft. Generally, these sites offer a much more traditional museum experience with docent-led tours around historic properties, exhibits, and an emphasis on primary sources and foregrounded historical methodology. The goal of this approach that by emphasizing a scholarly approach to 1692, visitors will think more critically about the witch trials and view the individuals involved as real people worthy of sympathy instead of abstracted, cartoonish witches or figures of horror and disdain.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁵ Site Visit, Rebecca Nurse Homestead, Danvers, Massachusetts, August 5, 2018; Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; Informational Interview, The Witch House, Salem, Massachusetts, September 17, 2018; Informational Interview, Essex Heritage Area, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018.

To create this counter-narrative, these non-profit attractions place a strong interpretive emphasis on the context for the 1692 crisis. One of the reasons that the scapegoating and sensationalism of mainstream narratives are so popular is because they offer a concrete reason for how the witch trials could have occurred, and in their experience guests arrive seeking a fairly decisive explanation.⁶⁹⁶ However, often, this singular reason is that a Black woman corrupted a group of silly white girls with voodoo and that they in turn managed to convince adult male Puritan zealots that witches were present in Salem with their theatrics.⁶⁹⁷ On tours, guides emphasize the beginnings of the witch trials in historical terms and foreground the limits of historical knowledge, for example by noting that the afflicted children did not leave documentation explaining the full nature of their afflictions or motives for making accusations, and as a result, historians cannot know exactly why they did what they did or distill the Witch Trials to a singular cause. In this way, the non-profits hope to give tourists a more critical understanding of the past and also undermine the racism and sexism embedded in the above narrative. This mode of interpretation represents the women involved in the trials as actors in the witch trials alongside men, instead of reducing them to caricatures of victimhood.

However, in practice, the interpretive emphasis on contextualizing the witch trials and efforts to cast aside stereotyped iterations of witch history tends to come at the

⁶⁹⁶ Informational Interview, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018; Informational Interview, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁶⁹⁷ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019; Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018; Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019.

expense of developing the individual women involved in 1692. Gender and women's history really only appear in a serious way in the interpretation of colonial domestic life at the historic house museums, the Witch House and Rebecca Nurse Homestead, but even at these locations the interpretive panels and docent scripts generally bifurcate women's history and domestic history from the history of witchcraft.⁶⁹⁸ The Essex Heritage programming emphasizes a more statistics-driven picture of the Witch Trials in their exhibit, noting, for instance, the number of accused who died in prison or were executed. They also offer a walking tour premised on correcting misassumptions many visitors have about the Salem Witch Trials, which assumes a general knowledge of the witch trials on the part of visitors and corrects particular facts (such as whether witches in New England were burned or hanged) more than it offers a comprehensive narrative of the crisis that would allow for more fleshed-out analysis of individuals' roles in the trials.⁶⁹⁹ Overall, serious discussions of witchcraft eschew gender and race for discussions of the legal, economic, or political context for the witch trials. Organizations like Essex Heritage focus so much on fact-checking, demographics, and contextualizing information shifts focus from the accused and essentially portrays the trials as a series of male actions. However, they also fail to bridge the gap between "normal" seventeenth-century domestic life and the worldview in which witchcraft accusations took place. As a result, women are disconnected from the context for and progression of the witch trials while also failing to address why accused witches were predominantly female. This problem is

⁶⁹⁸ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018. Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁶⁹⁹ Myths and Misconceptions Tour, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

exacerbated in interpretations of Tituba, who tends to be erased, presented straightforwardly as a victim, or have her role in 1692 minimized. Because docents develop issues of enslavement, race, and their intersections with gender solely around Tituba, these issues are minimized or effaced as well.

As Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas notes, “historic house museums express values and meanings which are not shared by everybody living in the same period, but which have been used as representing the essence of historical identity.”⁷⁰⁰ However, because historic house museums have the power to “contribute to the process of manufacturing cultural myths,” they are particularly well-poised to “examine and call into question invented traditions, distorted myths, and conventional values.”⁷⁰¹ As shown in Chapter One, Salem’s historic house museums were born in a period of national myth making and historic erasure. Public historians now have the opportunity to rework the narratives presented at historic house museums and the history of such institutions themselves to dismantle colonized, white supremacist versions of American history and mitigate erasures around women, the working class, and especially people of color. This kind of public history work can, as archivist Michelle Caswell argues, combat “symbolic annihilation” in public memory, a formulation developed by feminist media scholars during the women's movement that “describes what happens to members of marginalized

⁷⁰⁰ Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas, “Reality as Illusion, the Historic Houses that Become Museums,” in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Bettina Messias Carbonell, ed., (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 325.

⁷⁰¹ Risnicoff de Gorgas, “Reality as Illusion, the Historic Houses that Become Museums,” 325.

groups when they are absent, grossly under-represented, maligned, or trivialized by mainstream television programming, news outlets, and magazine coverage."⁷⁰²

However, by neglecting to incorporate issues of race and gender on the same sort of systemic level as issues of religion or class, which receive much greater interpretive emphasis, these sites offer a comfortably conciliatory version of ostensibly progressive history. These sites reveal a greater willingness to interpret the lives of women and do not glorify elite white men as overtly as their counterparts in the nineteenth century, but by marginalizing discussions of misogyny, slavery, and race, they present a narrative that allows visitors to engage with histories of women and people of color without having to think critically about the systems of inequality that produced them, let alone their own places in those systems. As Eichstedt and Small note in their study of plantation tourism, this kind of compartmentalization of slavery at historic sites serves to “protect the morality and justice” of a “white racial advantage” and validate white-centric modes of organizing the world, regardless of the personal beliefs of individual employees.⁷⁰³ This type of history-making ultimately fails to do the intellectual legwork of thinking about how to dismantle forms of power that contribute to a culture in which white people, particularly men, can ignore inequality and preserve their own privilege.⁷⁰⁴ As Lynell Thomas finds in her study of Blackness in New Orleans tourism, this kind of public

⁷⁰² Michelle Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian* 36 (2014), 27.

⁷⁰³ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 4, 8, 12.

⁷⁰⁴ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 15. See also Blight, *Race and Reunion*; DeWolf, *Inheriting the Trade*; Gallas, DeWolff Parry, and Ellis, *Interpreting Slavery*; Horton and Horton, *Slavery and Public History*; Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*; Jackson, *Speaking for the Enslaved*; Moyer, *Ancestors of a Worthy Life*.

history constitutes a feature of “post-civil rights discourse,” which “fulfilled visitors’ desire for Black representation and multiculturalist rhetoric” while simultaneously alleviating guilt over slavery and racial inequalities.⁷⁰⁵

Essex National Heritage Area

The official mandate of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site is to “interpret and preserve significant historical and cultural resources associated with the maritime history of New England and the United States...[and] tell the story of the development of colonial port towns, the importance of international trade to the early economy of the United States, and the connection between maritime trade and growing industrialization.”⁷⁰⁶ The park has really only begun to incorporate interpretation of the witch trials into its programming in the last ten years through a partnership with the Essex National Heritage Area.⁷⁰⁷ Essex National Heritage Area, which administers a range of historical activities, public programs, school partnerships in the region, employs tour guides and visitor service staff to administer programming around the Witch Trials. As of 2018, this consists of a small exhibit in the Visitor Center, a video shown three times per day, and a walking tour given on a varying schedule throughout the year.⁷⁰⁸

These attractions are lightly promoted, and attendance outside the month of October is low. According to an informational interview, this is partially because they do

⁷⁰⁵ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 83.

⁷⁰⁶ “Management,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/sama/learn/management/index.htm>

⁷⁰⁷ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018; Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁷⁰⁸ “Myths and Misconceptions – Walking Tour,” Essex National Heritage Area, <https://essexheritage.org/salemwitchhunt>

not have the resources to compete for marketing space with the for-profit attractions. Mostly, however, the goal for witchcraft programming is to provide historically grounded interpretation without that is respectful to the victims of 1692.⁷⁰⁹ This also has the benefit of keeping tour sizes small to allow for a conversational format, which helps tourists develop their own interpretations of the trials.⁷¹⁰ Essex Heritage keeps prices low (five dollars for the film and nine dollars for the tour, compared to twelve dollars for the Salem Witch Museum or twenty for walking tours like “Bewitched After Dark”) to make the material accessible and emphasize that the programming is done for the sake of accuracy and history not profit. Despite the relatively low cost and the volume of tourists who flow through the Visitor Center, the lack of marketing and perhaps a tendency to see the Visitor Center as a repository for general tourist information and the only clean public restrooms in the city rather than an attraction in its own right keeps attendance even lower than the Park Service and Essex Heritage would like.⁷¹¹

The exhibit is the most accessible of Essex Heritage’s three witch trial programs, as it is located near the information desk and gift shop and free to the public in a space where people are milling around. It presents a very general, data-driven overview of the trials. For instance, visitors learn the numbers and genders of the accused broken down by town, the historical geography of Essex County, view lists of those executed and those who died in prison, and see a pie chart of the numbers of afflicted persons by town. They also display a facsimile of Bridget Bishop’s execution warrant and a jail bill highlighting

⁷⁰⁹ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018.

⁷¹⁰ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 25, 2018.

⁷¹¹ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 25, 2018.

the cost of being incarcerated as well as the protracted imprisonment of the accused well into 1693 because of their inability to pay, perhaps favoring empiricism over interpretation. The only real qualitative information provides a few sentences of biographical information about some of the magistrates and ministers involved in the trials, as well as brief descriptions of treatises on witchcraft around the time of the Salem Witch Trials.⁷¹² One of the central interpretive goals of the Essex Heritage-National Park Service interpretation is presenting 1692 as a regional crisis, and this statistics-driven exhibit certainly succeeds in demonstrating the chronological, geographic, and demographic scale of the trials.⁷¹³

The “Myths and Misconceptions Tour” takes the content from the Visitor Center exhibit – indeed, tour participants view handout versions of the exhibit graphics – and expands upon it with further detail dispelling a few specific misunderstandings about the witch trials. The tour is premised on the idea that tourists have some sense of the Salem Witch Trials from pop culture, their English classes, or maybe the odd documentary or article, which tend to recycle a set of erroneous narratives that the tour corrects. For instance, Park Service and Essex Heritage staff routinely still hear that accusers specifically targeted the wealthy with their accusations in order to gain their property, which has been disproven by scholarship, or that fits of bewitchment resulted from ergot poisoning.⁷¹⁴ Psychologist Linnda Caporael published an article in 1976 claiming that ergot, a type of mold that grows on grain, can produce seizures and hallucinations, caused

⁷¹² Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁷¹³ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 25, 2018. Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁷¹⁴ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 141-142 and Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 175-176.

the symptoms interpreted as witchcraft in 1692.⁷¹⁵ This idea was quickly rejected by other scholars, but the idea has remained popular in the general consciousness.⁷¹⁶ As tour participants move along each site on the tour – the burying ground, the memorial, the sites of the old town hall, Bridget Bishop’s property, and the old gaol – they are presented with a myth and a corrective. For example, many people believe that confessing to witchcraft saved one’s life, but this was not necessarily the case; individuals such as Samuel Wardwell confessed and were later executed.⁷¹⁷ Together, the exhibit and the tour are meant to examine and recontextualize myths that visitors have already been exposed to.⁷¹⁸

The Essex Heritage interpretation in the exhibit and walking tour do complicate men’s roles in the witch trials beyond what visitors encounter at the other major witchcraft attractions. At the Salem Witch Museum, the Witch History Museum, and the Witch Dungeon, men appear as zealous patriarchs trying to protect their communities. For instance, they construct Samuel Parris as a stern man of God who expounded the need for vigilance against the work of the Devil from his pulpit. They also foreground Sheriff George Corwin, who looted the property of accused witches and inflicted torture upon his prisoners, most notably Giles Corey. They also build their interpretation to a large degree around constructing accused male witches as bold, virtuous heroes defying unjust court proceedings. For example, the Witch History Museum features a tableau of

⁷¹⁵ Linnda R. Caporael, “Ergotism: The Satan Loosed in Salem?” *Science* 192 (1976), 21-26.

⁷¹⁶ Nicholas Spanos, and Jack Gottlieb, “Ergotism and the Salem Village Witch Trials,” *Science* 194 (1976), 1390-1394; Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 25, 2018. Myths and Misconceptions Tour, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁷¹⁷ Myths and Misconceptions Tour, Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁷¹⁸ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 25, 2018.

minister and “strongman” George Burroughs fighting against the chains deputies used to haul him off to prison, while the Witch Museum includes a scene of him at the Gallows, protesting his innocence and reciting the Lord’s Prayer with the noose around his neck.⁷¹⁹ Conversely, the accusers and afflicted are consistently represented as petty, vindictive girls frolicking in the woods with the devil (literally – the Witch History Museum presents a tableau of teenage girls dancing and cartwheeling in the forest), falling prey to hysterics, and accusing innocent people of witchcraft out of silliness and malice. This version of history genders the witch trials according to regressive, traditional roles of active men motivated by ideals (even if misguided in the case of Parris) or ambition and women as squabbling and relatively unserious. Male figures appear as the real historical actors capable of exercising actual power, yet at the same time emphasizing the relatively frivolous malice of the teenage girls shifts the weight of moral culpability onto women lacking the control of a patriarch.⁷²⁰ This gendering is underscored with ageist stereotypes; adult men appear as the real actors and heroic martyrs, teenagers as the self-centered and emotional accusers and afflicted, and elderly women appear frail and helpless.

Essex Heritage’s emphasis on the statistics of gender, age, and residence of accusers, afflicted, accused, and executed seeks to complicate assumptions of men and women’s roles in the witch trials popularized by media by presenting gender as one factor

⁷¹⁹ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁷²⁰ Salem Witch Museum, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Salem Witch History Museum, September 2016 and August 2018. Salem Witch Dungeon, September 2016, August 2018, and September 2019. Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

among many that shaped participation in the witch trials.⁷²¹ The “Myths and Misconceptions Tour” builds upon this interpretive framework. The tour begins at the Visitor’s Center, where the guide gives an overview of the Salem Witch Trials, noting the statistics for executions and accusations and the geographic spread of where accusers and the accused lived. This introduction also establishes the narrative method of the tour in which the guide introduces some facts about the witch trials or the people involved, notes a common misconception (for instance, that most of the accused witches lived in Salem), and then corrects it (in fact, the largest number of accused came from Andover, another town in Essex County).⁷²² From there, the tour winds its way around downtown Salem, stopping at the Witch Trials Memorial, the Charter Street Cemetery where several judges involved in the Salem Witch Trials are buried, and sites where now-destroyed buildings like the prison, meeting house, and Bridget Bishop’s property once stood. The myths and misconceptions enumerated at these stops are discussed below.

The guide frames the trials as a crisis in which entire households and communities put their lives on hold in order to root out the perceived threat of witchcraft. The guide emphasizes that, contrary to popular depictions of malicious teenagers wreaking havoc, the accused, afflicted, and accusers were overwhelmingly adult men and women from a range of social backgrounds. Tourists learn that all but one of the formal accusations were entered by men on behalf of the household and that the women of the house would provide supporting testimony. Gender matters in that patriarchal responsibility required

⁷²¹ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018; Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018.

⁷²² “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018.

men to file accusations on behalf of the household. Thus, the decision to formally accuse someone of witchcraft appears as decision-making by an entire family, implemented according to traditional gender roles rather than as an ahistorical instance of teenagers run amok as at edutainment attractions.⁷²³

Essex Heritage further breaks down traditional gendering in Salem witchcraft interpretation by placing men in the generally feminized roles of afflicted, accuser, and victim. The guide states that men and women of all ages claimed to be afflicted and provided testimony to that effect in court, helping to convict individuals on the basis of evidence that could not be independently verified. In all of these cases, motivations for claiming to be bewitched remain opaque, although it is likely that many of those involved sincerely believed themselves to be suffering under a witch's influence.⁷²⁴ Thus, belief in bewitchment and testifying to one's afflictions are also shown as being culturally, community held beliefs instead of being particular to teenage girls. The exhibit and walking tour also eschew the hyper-masculine heroic narratives of other attractions that emphasize normatively male qualities like a lack of fear, reason, boldness, and active resistance. Instead, their data-driven interpretation rhetorically – and visually in the case of their graphics – places men alongside women in the categories of accused and executed. Typically, women are shown to be especially vulnerable and out of control of their bodies – due to hysterical convulsions as one of the afflicted or being executed under false accusations, for instance – in a way that is highly reminiscent of seventeenth-

⁷²³ “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018. For more on gender and the law in Colonial New England, see Chandler, *Law and Sexual Misconduct*; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 120.

⁷²⁴ “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018.

century understandings of women being particularly physically and morally weak and subject to the influence of the devil and *maleficia*.⁷²⁵ Here, however, by treating “victim” or “afflicted” as general categories implicating both genders, Essex Heritage complicates traditional constructions of heroic white masculinity and female vulnerability.

While the tour and exhibit do challenge traditional constructions of male and female (in)action found elsewhere in witchcraft interpretation, they do not address the underlying structural issues of misogyny that led to the disproportionate number of women among the accused and executed. This seems to indicate a high level of ambiguity about the role of women and the role of sexism in American culture. As tourist theorist John Urry notes, visitors’ existing knowledge and expectations of a site frequently determine what they will accept as an “authentic and satisfying” experience, and this is particularly problematic for Essex Heritage staff in interpreting gender in 1692.⁷²⁶ Many of the visitors on the witchcraft tours come with misogynistic narratives of hysterical girls and hypersexualized adult witches, and in some cases reject interpretation that attempts to complicate the role of men and women in the witch trials for not conforming to what they have heard before.⁷²⁷ This sexism seemingly exists in tension with a desire by many to avoid more constructions of women’s roles in the witch trials that reduce them to passive victims or hysterical girls as indicated by Essex Heritage and other sites discussed below as well as the acceptance of these readings by many other visitors. However, interpretation could go further in engaging with structural inequality

⁷²⁵ See, for instance, Karlsen *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* and Demos, *Entertaining Satan*; Reis.

⁷²⁶ Urry and Larson, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, 6, 205.

⁷²⁷ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018.

between genders. Marketing for the tour states that its premise is correcting myths about the past. The description of the tour provided on the Essex Heritage website informs tourists that this program “debunks many of the common false stories around the Salem Witch Trails while connecting tour-goers to the true sites and stories around Salem.”⁷²⁸ Given this interpretive mission, it seems that interpreters would be particularly well-poised to trouble the misogyny underlying many of the misconceptions about the feminization and characterization of the accused and afflicted, for example, and draw connections to the role of sexism in modern American culture. Thus, while many Americans might have a greater acceptance of or desire for more equitable or progressive histories, this does not necessarily negate a general discomfort with engaging systemic problems or individuals’ own positions and complicity in them. Many visitors want to be seen to be progressive or to be progressive but are less willing to do the social legwork to truly address issues of oppression in American society.

Public historians studying the interpretation of race and enslavement offer a number of methods for how sites could incorporate pasts of systemic inequality fully into their museum scripts. Historic house museums associated with racialized and gendered violence could draw upon Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s notions of “sites of conscience,” which considers the complicity of museums in the colonizing projects of national governments.⁷²⁹ Historic house museums are not just repositories of decorative arts and domestic histories, but rather sites that embody colonial practices and racial

⁷²⁸ “About Us,” Essex National Heritage Area, *Essex National Heritage Area*, <https://essexheritage.org/about>

⁷²⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “The Museum as Catalyst,” in *Museum 2000: Confirmation or Challenge?* ed. Per-Uno Agren (Stockholm: Swedish Traveling Exhibitions, 2002).

hierarchies. For instance, when guiding visitors through explanations of Tituba's role in the Witch Trials, tour leaders and docents could foreground the work done by witchcraft tourism to promote racist caricatures that scapegoat her for the start of the Salem Witch Trials. Further, as David Blight notes in his study of Civil War memory-making, national memories of slavery result not only from white people imposing white supremacist versions of history on the nation, but also an active (and ongoing) process of negotiation and resistance on the part of people of color. Highlighting Tituba's direct resistance to the pressures of colonial enslavement and colonialism could tie into anti-racist, anti-colonial memory work done around Salem by writers like Maryse Condé.⁷³⁰

Kristen L. Gallas, James DeWolff Parry, and Rex Ellis suggest ways in which plantation house museums might address historical erasures and better document race and racism in American history. Their work is in many ways a "how to" guide for subverting white supremacist narratives of slavery.⁷³¹ Their book is organized around a set of guiding principles to developing a better practice. First, they suggest connecting place-based stories to larger historic contexts in order to challenge white complacency with traditional knowledge of American history. In particular, they recommend incorporating individual's stories and emphasizing enslaved persons' agency in shaping their lives, American culture, and historical processes.⁷³² The Witch House, Rebecca Nurse Homestead, and Essex Heritage programming are well-positioned to do this sort of memory work. For instance, Tituba is an essential figure in witchcraft interpretation.

⁷³⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion* and Condé, *I, Tituba*.

⁷³¹ See Gallas DeWolff Perry, and Ellis, *Interpreting Slavery*.

⁷³² Gallas, DeWolff Perry, and Ellis, *Interpreting Slavery*, 12, 17-37.

Docents could, drawing on trial documents and the work of scholars such as Elaine Breslaw, discuss how she brought her knowledge of Arawak, Puritan, and African understandings of spirits, devils, and magic when crafting her testimony and thereby influencing the course of the Salem Witch Trials. By interpreting how this blend of Native, Black, and English stories could be legible to Puritan interrogators, guides could produce New England as a contested, multi-cultural space. This kind of work could be critical to undermining the kind of memory-making work identified by scholars such as Joanne Melish and Jean M. O'Brien who trace the ways in which white Americans sought to construct New England as a fundamentally white space that people of color have imposed themselves on.⁷³³ Melish finds that between 1780 and 1860, Northerners increasingly sought to distinguish themselves as the moral and intellectual leaders of the nation in contrast to the slave-owning South, and as a result, they invented a fantasy of a free New England by effacing histories of slavery and Blackness.⁷³⁴ O'Brien examines how the local historians and antiquarians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought to write Native Americans out of existence part of an "ideological project" to portray Indians as extinct, despite the continued presence of indigenous people in New England. This allowed white New Englanders to claim to be "first" in the nation in terms of being the locus of the beginnings of America, in terms of institution building, and in terms of social ordering.⁷³⁵ For Teresa Moyer, foregrounding these histories in public spaces provides opportunities to "examine the power of race over things and rights, as

⁷³³ See O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*; Newell, *Brethren by Nature*; DeLucia, *Memory Lands*; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*.

⁷³⁴ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 1-10.

⁷³⁵ O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xii-xiii.

well as the ways that race can simultaneously impact the landscape and seem invisible on it. Equal access to heritage through the interpretation of all peoples who lived and worked at historic sites thus furthers the cause of social justice."⁷³⁶ She further argues that racism is a “habit of thought” that can be interrupted by documenting the history of race and slavery.⁷³⁷ To document histories of racism and misogyny for audiences, Galls, Perry, and Ellis stress the importance of training docents to interrogate their own racial identities and barriers and become cognizant of their preconceptions and knowledge gaps through training strategies that would make staff more comfortable talking about race.⁷³⁸

Interpreting 1692 as a period of regional crisis in which entire families and communities participated according to traditional gender roles – with patriarchs acting as judges, entering accusations on defense of their families, and women offering corroboration – is certainly legitimate. However, the emphasis on widespread male participation in the witch trials, when put into dialogue with the feminization of the roles of accuser and afflicted in the major museum attractions, seems to suggest that adult men are somehow a legitimizing presence in taking the court proceedings and seventeenth-century beliefs seriously. As noted in the previous chapter, sites like the Salem Witch Museum, the Witch History Museum, and the Witch Dungeon create a horrific atmosphere partly by emphasizing the chaos that ensues when women, particularly girls, act outside male control and have their words taken seriously by authority figures. By contrast, Essex Heritage seeks to present the events of 1692 in a way that will make them

⁷³⁶ Moyer, *Ancestors of a Worthy Life*, 3-4.

⁷³⁷ Moyer, *Ancestors of a Worthy Life*, 5.

⁷³⁸ Gallas, DeWolff Perry, and Ellis, *Interpreting Slavery*, 13, 38-46.

comprehensible and allow visitors to connect with the people involved. To that end, interpretation places a premium on giving visitors a sense of how strongly people believed in witchcraft and why accusations of bewitchment would seem credible in a court of law. To do so, organizations like Essex Heritage stress the demographics of the witch trials, the religious-cultural context of faith in God and the devil, and in particular highlight the full participation of men in the trials and in these belief systems. This certainly is not bad history. Men did believe and act in these ways alongside women. However, a picture of belief systems in which accusations and testimony can be taken seriously, understood, and viewed with a degree of compassion center the involvement of men. This interpretation presented by attractions like the Myths and Misconceptions tour are juxtaposed with narratives in which accusations of witchcraft are ridiculed, the accusers and afflicted outright vilified, and acceptance of their testimony as totally absurd center the role of women. This implies that the words of young women in particular are inherently suspect and reinforces a cultural tendency to view men as more trustworthy and see their presence as legitimizing or representing actual and moral authority.⁷³⁹

While Essex Heritage does jettison the sexist stereotypes that characterize female participants in the witch trials as girls elsewhere, they also lose an interpretive emphasis

⁷³⁹ Maria Brann & Kimberly Leezer Himes “Perceived Credibility of Male Versus Female Television Newscasters, Communication Research Reports,” *Communication Research Reports* 27 (2010), 243-252; Tessa Ditono, “A High Bar or a Double Standard? Gender, Competence, and Information in Political Campaigns,” *Political Behavior* 39 (2017), 301-325. See also Kathleen Dolan, *When Does Gender Matter? Women Candidates and Gender Stereotypes in American Elections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Devon Johnson, Amy Farrell, Patricia Y. Warren, and Lawrence D. Bobo, eds., *Deadly Injustice: Trayvon Martin, Race, and the Criminal Justice System* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Sherri Lynn Johnson, “The Color of Truth: Race and the Assessment of Credibility,” *Michigan Journal of Race and Law* 1 (1996), 263-346; Tess M.S. Neal, “Women as Expert Witnesses: A Review of the Literature,” *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 32 (2014), 164-179.

on the lives and motivations of individual women. Instead, the exhibit and tour tend to only name women when illustrating points like demographic trends or treatment of prisoners. In the exhibit, for instance, Bridget Bishop is named in the display of her execution warrant, Dorcas Good's blankets appear on the transcript of a jailer's bill, while prosperous Susannah Martin and impoverished Sarah Good are mentioned on the tour to show the range of classes implicated in witchcraft accusations.⁷⁴⁰ Interpretation seeks to avoid the sexist stereotyping characteristic of popular culture and other local attractions. Perhaps as a result of trying to downplay these narratives and avoid the scapegoating of female participants in the witch trials, the role of women in general and the level of individuation among them is diminished.

In general, when gender is invoked in the tour it is generally to stress negative action, such as the fact that age and genders were involved in accusations, not just teenage girls, or that the afflicted also included a demographic range instead of fifteen and sixteen year old girls dancing around invoking the devil. What they did do remains unclear, further occluded by the treatment of "girls" as a vague collective instead of as individuals.⁷⁴¹ Essex Heritage sometimes struggles to balance de-emphasizing the blame placed on the afflicted girls and allowing for agency and complexity within patriarchal systems. The interpretive emphasis on fact-checking particular myths like whether or not victims were burned at the stake or that the afflicted were all teenage girls is not well integrated with women's individual personhood. As a result, the narrative of 1692 skews

⁷⁴⁰ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018; "Myths and Misconceptions Tour," August 2018.

⁷⁴¹ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018; "Myths and Misconceptions Tour," August 2018.

towards men and leaves women as a relatively indistinct group of victims upon whom legal, economic, and social stressors tragically played out. It seems that guides could recover accused women's historical personhood by incorporating their biographies as details or evidence of how an individual accumulated a reputation over time that allowed for accusations of witchcraft in 1692, or how constructions of "the witch" mapped over specific personages.

There seems to be a difficulty with showing women as active and acting in morally ambiguous ways during a fraught episode of American history without falling back on misogynistic stereotypes. Owing perhaps to the prevalence of misogyny in American culture generally and in local tourism specifically, there seems to be a reluctance to depict women acting in ethically compromised ways and actually wielding influence and power in destructive ways.

The closest that interpretation gets to distinguishing a woman's actions or interiority is in the Visitor Center exhibit, which mentions in its witchcraft timeline that Ann Putnam Jr. lost both of her parents in 1699 and had to raise her nine children on her own and that she formally apologized for her participation in the witch trials before her congregation in 1706. Part of this apology is quoted for visitors.⁷⁴² It is unclear how visitors should understand her identity, since her particular role in the trials is not mentioned in the exhibit. At twelve years old, she had been one of the first to make accusations of witchcraft in Salem and went on to provide evidence against others.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴² Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁴³ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 15, 21, 27-28, 115.

Visitors only see her as suffering and repenting for the rest of her adult life.⁷⁴⁴ On the walking tour, the guide only provides an additional note that Putnam did not really apologize for her actions so much as displace blame to being “deluded by Satan.”⁷⁴⁵ By contrast, when the walking tour discusses male judges’ understandings of their actions, visitors learn about how they felt they were protecting their communities and worked to uphold the rule of law. They state, for instance, that Judge Hathorne never apologized, that his descendent Nathaniel Hawthorne viewed the connection proudly, and that Judge Samuel Sewell did apologize and recognize the innocence of his victims.⁷⁴⁶ These men receive more recognition for their motivations and credit for their apologies (in Sewell’s case), and representations of their lives after the trials is not nearly so punitive. The exhibit only mentions Ann Putnam, meanwhile, to describe her suffering and social punishment for her role in the witch trials, despite being a child in 1692 in contrast to the adult men around her. Furthermore, the gender gap between allowances for moral greyness, expectations of repentance and atonement, goes unremarked upon.⁷⁴⁷ Anxieties about reproducing sexist beliefs combined with a cultural discomfort with powerful, villainous women leads to the pacifying of female actors and a collapsing of their lives, motives, and complications. Thus, while many Americans want more positive representations of women and fewer actively sexist ones, this does not translate to a general cultural comfort with women exercising power, particularly in ways that are

⁷⁴⁴ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁴⁵ “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018.

⁷⁴⁶ “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018.

⁷⁴⁷ “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018; Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

fraught.⁷⁴⁸ This indicates a continued pressure or cultural premium placed on women being good.

The gap between male and female action and the amount of complexity or ambiguity afforded to men becomes even more noticeable when looking at the interpretation of the judges and ministers involved in the trials. In the walking tour and especially in the exhibit, visitors see more individual personhood, personalities, and multiple belief systems among men in 1692 than they do for women. For instance, tourists learn that while Cotton Mather believed wholeheartedly in witchcraft and advocated for convicted witches' harsh punishment, he also argued against the use of spectral evidence. Spectral evidence, as described by historian Richard Weisman, "was founded on the belief that demons could assume the identity of a person, and, as a specter, inflict harm on the body of another person or simply perform general mischiefs. If this evidence were admitted, the accused would be left with virtually no means of challenge. If she were miles away from the crime...the accuser could claim that it was her specter...that established her guilt."⁷⁴⁹ Typically, witchcraft convictions hinged on more tangible evidence such as poppets or witch's marks (places on the body where a witch would nurse a demonic familiar), but the court could only produce these forms of evidence against a few suspects. They could much more easily obtain testimony of spectral attacks, and so their decision to rely on spectral evidence to gain convictions

⁷⁴⁸ Jessica Bennett, "But Is She Likeable Enough?" *The New York Times* August 31, 2019, accessed online; Hannah Riley Bowles, Linda Babcock, and Lei Lai, "Social incentives for gender differences in the propensity to initiate negotiations: Sometimes it does hurt to ask," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 103 (2007), 84-103; Marianne Cooper, "For Women Leaders, Likeability and Success Hardly Go Hand-in-Hand," *Harvard Business Review* April 30, 2013, accessed online.

⁷⁴⁹ Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion*, 104.

rapidly escalated the scale of the witch trials.⁷⁵⁰ Chief Justice Stoughton’s decision to allow spectral evidence and “proof” based on his own opinions is contrasted with Increase Mather’s criticism of the trials and Robert Calef’s denunciation of Cotton Mather and his ideas. The exhibit does not provide context for what spectral evidence was, how it came to be used in the trials, or what role it played in escalating the scale of the panic.⁷⁵¹ On the walking tour, visitors learn about how some of the judges like Samuel Sewell and John Hathorne (as well as his descendent Nathaniel Hawthorne) viewed their participation in the witch trials over their lifetimes.⁷⁵² This stands in contrast to the treatment of women noted above, where particular women are named mostly to illustrate demographic points like the age range of victims or the bills faced by the incarcerated. Indeed, the judges and theologians are identified in the Visitor Center exhibit as those “whose involvement during the Salem Witch Trials left a lasting impact.” The display does not define what this lasting impact of their actions during the witch panic was.⁷⁵³ This interpretive gap reinforces a gendered dichotomy of behavior that does not afford women the same sort of position as historical actors or commentators.

Essex Heritage has shed the sexist interpretation of women in the trials found elsewhere in Salem but have not really developed substantial narratives of individual women or complex female involvement to replace it. Dispelling the wholesale demonization of women has been done in a way that shifts focus mostly onto male actors. Because Essex Heritage explicitly markets this content as a corrective for most other

⁷⁵⁰ Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion*, 150-154.

⁷⁵¹ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁵² “Myths and Misconceptions Tour,” August 2018.

⁷⁵³ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

media tourists will have seen, the emphasis on male action and (relative) female inaction, as well as a higher level of individuation of male actors seemingly adds a scholarly stamp of approval for a bifurcation between male/active and female/passive in early American life. This kind of assumption perpetuates a tendency in historical teaching, writing, and interpretation that treats white men as the agents of historical change. This in turn upholds an idea that men's histories are particularly important and the ones with which everyone should identify, marginalizing the histories of women and people of color as niche.

Tituba, let alone the other people of color involved in the witch trials, is strikingly absent from this interpretation. She does not appear at all in the Visitor Center exhibit, nor did my tour guide mention her on the tour.⁷⁵⁴ Depending on the particular guide and tour group, interpreters may not discuss her. Others, however clarify that Tituba had been indigenous rather than Black and that she had been scapegoated due to her enslaved status.⁷⁵⁵ Critically, then, it is entirely possible for visitors to take the tour and view the exhibit without ever having the racist narratives that are prevalent in popular culture corrected. Given the longevity of this characterization of Tituba and the extent to which it has been internalized, it seems like the racist myth-making surrounding Tituba would be an essential misconception to dispel.

Given that Tituba's scapegoating and racial identity are some of the most pernicious fictions about the Salem Witch Trials, their erasure or marginalization within

⁷⁵⁴ "Myths and Misconceptions Tour," August 2018; Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁵⁵ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018.

Essex Heritage’s interpretation reflects a larger suppression of Black and indigenous histories in American culture. The uneven inclusion of Tituba in interpretation highlights the ways in which white privilege – approximately 93 percent of tourists are white – allows tourists to set aside uncomfortable issues of racialized and gender inequalities or to not even be aware of them.⁷⁵⁶ As noted above, Tituba might not be addressed in a particular walking tour.⁷⁵⁷ By contrast, misconceptions about white people involved in the Salem Witch Trials – the idea that witches were burned rather than hanged particularly peeves interpreters – receive much more interpretive emphasis and consistency.⁷⁵⁸ Marginalizing this knowledge or viewing it as comparable to misunderstandings about execution methods in civil versus ecclesiastical law is particularly troubling since the erasure of histories of people of color have harmful implications for those living in the present. It is not enough to simply not repeat racist stereotypes about Tituba; omitting her presence and the structural inequalities at play in her representations reproduces a power dynamic in which the comfort of white interpreters and visitors is privileged over even the most basic acknowledgment of New England’s role in slavery and its legacy for Black and indigenous New Englanders.

Tourists would only see an indigenous presence in the region if they watch the thirty-eight minute documentary, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, produced and screened by the

⁷⁵⁶ “New Report Provides Valuable Insight on Tourism and Visitors to Salem,” <https://www.nps.gov/sama/learn/news/new-report-provides-valuable-insight-on-tourism-and-visitors-to-salem.htm>

⁷⁵⁷ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018.

⁷⁵⁸ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018; Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

National Park Service in partnership with Essex Heritage.⁷⁵⁹ According to an informational interview, the film draws heavily on the work of historian Benjamin Ray, particularly his work on religion in Salem, advancing the idea that Parris catalyzed and focused the witch trials in order to create a religious revival, heavily invoking witchcraft in his preaching.⁷⁶⁰ The film also draws upon the work of Mary Beth Norton, who argues in *In the Devil's Snare* that “the dramatic events of 1692 can be fully understood only by viewing them as intricately related to concurrent political and military affairs in northern New England,” namely King William’s War between the English and the Abenaki.⁷⁶¹ Puritans associated the Devil with Native Americans – referring to both as “black men,” for instance – and a few of the afflicted children were either refugees from the wars in Maine or knew people who were. This may have influenced their testimony, as their descriptions of spectral torment sometimes mirrored the brutalities of war. Norton cites the example of Ann Putnam’s testimony about the afflictions of another girl, Mercy Lewis, a refugee from Maine. Putnam described a specter roasting Lewis on a spit, echoing stories of Native Americans roasting the English alive.⁷⁶² Including the context of conflict between English colonists and Native New Englanders has the potential to construct the region as contested indigenous space. In the film, however, the role of conflict with Native American tribes is peripheral and is mostly introduced in order to argue that refugees from the frontier might have suffered from PTSD, the symptoms of

⁷⁵⁹ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁷⁶⁰ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; See also Ray, *Satan and Salem*.

⁷⁶¹ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 4-5.

⁷⁶² Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 48.

which might have seemed like bewitchment to the English in 1692.⁷⁶³ Casting Native peoples as aggressive interlopers and relegating them to the edges of the narrative and the frontier of 1692 denaturalizes Massachusetts as an indigenous landscape and remakes it as a fundamentally white, Anglo-Saxon space. This is reinforced later in the film when it shows Reverend Samuel Parris bringing two indigenous slaves to Salem Village from the Caribbean.⁷⁶⁴ The only Native presences shown in the area are from outside the colony and subsequently removed when Tituba is sold in 1693.⁷⁶⁵

The representation of Tituba as an indigenous woman from the Caribbean is much stronger, certainly when compared to the rest of Essex Heritage's interpretation. For instance, Tituba is explicitly identified as Native and portrayed by a Wampanoag actress in the Essex Heritage film.⁷⁶⁶ According to an informational interview, interpreters sought to demonstrate that she was not the catalyst for the witch trials.⁷⁶⁷ First, the film narratively distances Tituba from the outbreak of the witch trials. Whereas sites like the Salem Witch Museum begin with Tituba's alleged magical acts and locate her as the beginning of the trials, the documentary opens with regional conflicts over warfare, economics, and religion exacerbated by factionalism in Salem and the efforts of Samuel Parris to make a name for himself by instigating a religious revival. The first afflicted children start to exhibit signs of bewitchment, then Tituba is identified as a suspect. Thus,

⁷⁶³ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁶⁴ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁶⁵ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁶⁶ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁶⁷ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018. Informational Interview, NPS, Salem Massachusetts.

in this narrative, community tensions and afflictions caused Tituba's identification as a witch, not the other way around.⁷⁶⁸

According to an interview, filmmakers also tried to retain Tituba's agency while acknowledging the power differential between her and the white New Englanders, including Parris, involved in the court proceedings.⁷⁶⁹ The execution of this is somewhat uneven. For instance, they establish slavery as an ingrained part of New England culture and that Parris' position as her master gave him extra power over her in forcing a confession.⁷⁷⁰ At the same time, the film reenacts Tituba's interrogation, presenting visitors with her own words. In this way, tourists see Tituba shaping the unfolding narrative of witchcraft in Salem by playing on the white men's anxieties and introducing the idea of an entire network of conspiring witches in Salem.⁷⁷¹ Balancing interpretation of the structural inequalities Tituba faced with her ability to act and manipulate those systems is a key departure from most interpretation of her in Salem. This part of the documentary could offer a model for curators and educators elsewhere in the tourist industry for how to approach interpreting Tituba, Candy, or Mary Black. For the most part, inequalities of race and enslavement made her particularly vulnerable to accusation and pressure under the law, but within that framework she is shown to be intelligent and capable of shaping unfolding events.

However, film undercuts itself when one of the interviewed historians states that Tituba was an "enigmatic" figure, whose motivations for providing the testimony that she

⁷⁶⁸ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁶⁹ Informational Interview, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁷⁷⁰ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁷¹ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

did are unknown, except that “as a slave, she usually did what her master wanted her to do because that's what slaves learned how to do.”⁷⁷² First, this flattens out much of Tituba’s agency. Second, while it is certainly true that people can only speculate about Tituba’s interiority, this is because inequalities of race, gender, and enslavement precluded her recording her own life or her meriting attention from those in positions of power beyond her immediate participation in the witch trials. Elaine Breslaw in particular has shown through a close-reading of Tituba’s court documents how she turned Puritan fears of the Devil and witchcraft against their own community by confirming fears that a diabolical network existed in Salem, bent on the destruction of godly New Englanders.⁷⁷³ By singling out her motivations as particularly “enigmatic” without context, the film seems to suggest that Tituba is somehow inherently mysterious and plays into stereotypes about Native Americans as being peculiarly other or inscrutable.

The documentary uses the same method of integrating reenacted court transcripts with historians’ commentary to allow for personal agency among the white women involved in the witch trials. This is particularly true for Rebecca Nurse. In contrast to the characterization as a frail, largely helpless Christian martyr that predominates in Salem tourism, the transcripts from Nurse’s trials show her asserting her innocence and resisting the questioning of the judges, for instance by refusing to answer particular questions or comment on potential traps of wordplay set by prosecutors.⁷⁷⁴ The film identifies how the ways in which the court operated – relying on spectral evidence, touch tests, and in some

⁷⁷² Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁷³ See Breslaw, *Tituba*, 21-151.

⁷⁷⁴ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

cases having influential men like Thomas Putnam adding text to depositions to make them more convincing in court – stacked the odds against people like Nurse.⁷⁷⁵ Even within this context, however, interpreters do not render her meek or helpless. By allowing tourists to hear her own words, some semblance of Nurse’s personhood come through, and the film affords one of the few instances in which tourists might gain an understanding of how Nurse herself responded to the charges against her and formulated her own defense.

The film also gives the afflicted girls a bit more nuance and compassion than the for-profit museums. According to the documentary, they should be seen as the tools of prosecutors as well as their victims.⁷⁷⁶ This follows Ray’s scholarship, which finds that once the afflicted started showing signs of bewitchment and magistrates took up accusations of witchcraft, the children became trapped, forced into responding to judges in the way that they want lest they get accused of witchcraft as well.⁷⁷⁷ The film does not treat “the girls” as a bloc, but rather allows for a multiplicity of possible motives. One commentator, for instance, argued that Ann Putnam and others likely did suffer afflictions and believe themselves bewitched, while others on the margins might have entered testimonies for fun. Similarly, individuals who were truly frightened and provided testimonies out of a sincere belief in witchcraft might have later found themselves performing roles at the behest of the magistrates as they were repeatedly called upon in court or taken around to neighboring towns to identify further witches.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁵ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁷⁶ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

⁷⁷⁷ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; See also Ray, *Satan and Salem*.

⁷⁷⁸ Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Center, August 2018.

In this interpretation, the afflicted retain their active role in influencing the scope of the witch panic and in shaping particular trials by being able to provide testimony, perhaps perform for their communities, and sway courtrooms. At the same time, the film does not vilify the girls, highlighting the extent to which magistrates and other community leaders manipulated the trials in pursuit of their own ends and ultimately allowed 1692 to unfold as it did.

However, again, the interpretation singles out the teenage girls giving testimony as particularly suspect. The documentary asks why the magistrates believed these girls, particularly when they came from elite families in Salem and presumably should have been educated enough to know better. If seventeenth-century New Englanders accepted witchcraft as an absolute reality, it does not seem out of the question for clergy or judges to take accusations of witchcraft seriously. Thus, the words of young women in particular must be what is considered suspect. The girls might increasingly be figures of sympathy and some understanding, but are still not to be inherently taken seriously.

Witchcraft at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead continues to operate at something of a remove from the tourist industry in Salem, retaining its core mission of interpreting the life of Rebecca Nurse and colonial domesticity for an audience comprised of large numbers of descendants. Nurse's accusation shocked her neighbors in 1692, given her lifelong reputation for piety and Godly living. As described in Chapter One, her descendants organized a memorial association in the nineteenth-century to advance the

commemoration of her memory as a martyr to Christian virtue, erecting, for instance, the memorial to her on the Homestead property. The Danvers Alarm List Company, a group of living history militia re-enactors, now operate the site as a private non-profit staffed entirely by volunteers.⁷⁷⁹ Visitors have the option of exploring house, the family cemetery, and a replica of the Salem Village Meeting House on their own or taking a guided tour of the house with volunteer docents.⁷⁸⁰ The interpretation of the site is thematically and physically bifurcated between the house and the meeting house. The home operates as a standard historic house museum, displaying domestic objects used to illustrate anecdotes about the family and explanations of seventeenth-century daily life such as cookery and other forms of household labor. This mode of interpretation closely adheres to a model of interpreting historic house museums established at the turn of the twentieth century, in which docents use material culture in dialogue with historical narratives and architecture to interpret the past and symbolize larger social meanings valorizing the hardiness of white colonial Americans.⁷⁸¹

Any discussion of witchcraft is confined to the reconstructed meeting house.⁷⁸² The site therefore operates as something of a circuit between learning about colonial domestic life at the house, hearing about the witch trials at the meeting house, and commemorating Rebecca Nurse at her memorial in the family cemetery.⁷⁸³ This could be

⁷⁷⁹ “About Us,” The Rebecca Nurse Homestead, <http://www.rebeccanurse.org/about-us/>

⁷⁸⁰ The Meeting House was built for the 1984 film *Three Sovereigns for Sarah* and subsequently relocated to the Homestead grounds. Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁷⁸¹ Williams, *Alice Morse Earle*, 13, 204-7; Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 21-22.

⁷⁸² Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁷⁸³ Although there is no interpretation of him at the Homestead, George Jacobs’ remains are interred in the cemetery as well. Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

problematic for conferring the authenticity of a space onto a particular historic narrative for some visitors since, as Edward Bruner notes, for some, the reconstructions or reconfiguring of the built environment read as less authentic.⁷⁸⁴ As found by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, modern Americans also tend to connect to and interpret history through the lens of familial and local histories, and view material culture as a principal means of understanding and accessing the past. Thelen and Rosenzweig found that museum goers desire an “unmediated interaction” with history, which artifacts at museums – the presence of the past – provide. They also typically found personal histories, particularly those connected with their own relatives, to be the most meaningful.⁷⁸⁵ Potentially, then, the lack of connection between interpretation of the Nurses and the “authentic” colonial space of the house and the reconstructed meeting house and a docent script that emphasizes a general overview of 1692 over the experiences of individuals like Rebecca Nurse during that period risks making historical theories about the Salem Witch Trials seem less grounded or less accurate, since they cannot be mediated by surviving material culture, documentation, and are somewhat detached from personal histories of individuals such as Nurse. This kind of division between the usual functioning of a colonial family and colonial worldview also alienates the witch trials in colonial history, physically and rhetorically positioning them as something apart from seventeenth-century New England instead of an outgrowth of the Puritan worldview and experiences of daily life.

⁷⁸⁴ Bruner, *Culture on Tour*, 11.

⁷⁸⁵ Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 21-22.

On a site visit in 2016, the Homestead displayed informational panels around the entrance of the reconstructed meeting house and projected a PowerPoint presentation against the back wall (I did not see this PowerPoint on a site visit in 2018). The panels operated as a response to common visitor misconceptions about the witch trials.⁷⁸⁶ They explained that the witch trials were a regional crisis not specific to Salem, that New Englanders hanged witches rather than burned them due to their status as a civil rather than ecclesiastical offense, that accusers could not assume the property of their victims, and that confessing to witchcraft did not necessarily mean avoiding execution. Visitors could also view a pie chart demonstrating the numbers of accused in each town.⁷⁸⁷ The only actual narrative offered for the witch trials in this display explains how they ended. According to this interpretation, the Salem Witch Trials ended when the governor heard of a book challenging the use of spectral evidence, which had been key to the scale of accusations and convictions in the trials thus far. He replaced the court that had overseen the witch trials, prohibited the use of spectral evidence, and reprieved upcoming executions. He also received approval from the province's attorney general and King William to end the trials altogether and free those remaining in prison.⁷⁸⁸ Thus, the witch trials appeared to be strictly a legal matter. Although some discussion of colonial legal frameworks for viewing witchcraft as well as the actual legal proceedings in the prosecutions is critical for understanding 1692, the snippets of information act as

⁷⁸⁶ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018;

⁷⁸⁷ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁷⁸⁸ This panel also only refers to "the King," namely, William III despite the fact that his wife Queen Mary II was co-ruler. The law and political power thus appear strictly as male enterprises. Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

responses to specific questions rather than a cohesive narrative offering a real explanation of legal treatments of *maleficia*. The visitor walks away having learned a few facts rather than engaging with the complexities of 1692.

The simplification of colonial courts and the witchcraft crisis to a few frequently asked questions in this case elides the presence of women in these systems. In the earliest legal actions against Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne alone, women appear as both victims of bewitchment and the accused, testified as witnesses, gave depositions, and conducted physical examinations of the alleged witches on behalf of the magistrates.⁷⁸⁹ Despite this, the only individuals, let alone active agents, shown to be involved in the witch trials are men like Governor Phips. This effaces the presence of the accused from the interpretation and positions them essentially as objects upon which the great men of New England acted through the use of the law.⁷⁹⁰ While interpreting the Salem Witch Trials through the lens of legal history is certainly a valid approach, there is no reason why such an interpretation should appear to be the reserve of elite white men given the degree to which women and the lower classes engaged the Anglo-American judiciary in general.⁷⁹¹ As John Demos notes, New England was a “highly litigious society.”⁷⁹² “Ordinary” New Englanders used lawsuits as a means of “airing grievances” and mediating personal disputes.⁷⁹³ Even those of modest means took their neighbors to court to recover small debts or property, while women used slander lawsuits

⁷⁸⁹ Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 14-24.

⁷⁹⁰ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁷⁹¹ For discussions of women and legal culture in colonial New England, see Chandler, *Law and Sexual Misconduct in New England, 1650-1750*.

⁷⁹² Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 38.

⁷⁹³ Chandler, *Law and Sexual Misconduct*, 5.

as a means of defending their reputations from gossip, particularly sexual gossip.⁷⁹⁴ Further, in his study of New England witchcraft writ large, Demos finds that many accused witches were extremely litigious – one woman, for instance, instigated at least a dozen lawsuits at around the time of her witch trial.⁷⁹⁵ Combative, disruptive personalities were the most likely to accrue suspicions of witchcraft, and specific accusations of witchcraft could arise from a particular legal conflict. Conversely, some women used slander suits to defend themselves from accusations of witchcraft.⁷⁹⁶ The Homestead exhibit therefore misrepresented legal operations in 1692 specifically and in colonial New England in general; but in doing so, the exhibit naturalized the exercise of power by white men and presents history as something that happens to women but is made by men.

Further, the cultivated contrast between the Homestead and other witchcraft attractions in Salem, which tend to center race and gender more prominently, if problematically, in their narratives, suggests that rigorous, scholarly approaches to the history of witchcraft happen within a conservative, white male dominated tradition. This impression is reinforced when witchcraft tourism is viewed alongside maritime history, which is curated by the National Park Service at Salem Maritime National Historic Park. The National Park Service markets maritime history as an educational experience about the true heritage of Salem in regional history.⁷⁹⁷ This reliance on heritage as a concept in maritime and mercantile histories is significant since, following David Lowenthal and

⁷⁹⁴ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, 26-27; Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 86-87.

⁷⁹⁵ Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 86-87.

⁷⁹⁶ Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 158.

⁷⁹⁷ Site Visit, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, 2016, 2018

Antoinette Jackson, it connotes traditional, public-facing narratives of the past that are typically attached to grand houses and reify traditional narratives of nation, class, gender, and, in this case, race. “Heritage” is also “presentist” in its concerns and applications, as it is shaped by what a community “wants to save, make active, and continue in the present.”⁷⁹⁸ The history being marketed as the real, scholarly history of Essex County is upheld as an essentially male preserve. In Salem, then, the heritage New Englanders “use” is white and premised on the erasure of Black and indigenous history. Indeed, despite the critical role women played in the development of Salem’s maritime trade and the rich history of African Americans in the city, the site’s narrative remains overwhelmingly white and male.⁷⁹⁹ The bifurcation between sites marketed as educational, centering male history, and sensationalized sites, which incorporate female actors and people of color to a greater degree, bolsters assumptions about who exercised agency in the past and the perceived worth or intellectual rigor of men’s and women’s histories in the present.

The second exhibit in the meeting house, a slideshow interspersing information about the prosecution of Rebecca Nurse and the progress of the witch trials in general, reinforced the coding of agency as male and passivity as female from the first exhibit. The interpretation of Nurse’s role in the trials is cursory at best. According to the visual presentation, Rebecca Nurse was a respected figure and one of the first upstanding Church members to be denounced as a witch, much to the shock of her community.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ Jackson, *Speaking for the Enslaved*, 23; Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past*, xv.

⁷⁹⁹ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

⁸⁰⁰ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

Visitors also learn that her accusers testified that she sent her specter to harm them and killed several infants. The jury initially acquitted her, but after an outcry that her spirit continued to torment the afflicted girls, she was convicted and hanged in July, 1692. Eventually in 1693, Governor Phips ends the witch trials, doubting the ability of the courts to deliver justice.⁸⁰¹ Even in a presentation about Rebecca Nurse in the Salem Witch Trials at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, she does not have any sort of will or historical specificity. Rather, she appears to be passive, an emblem of respectability and virtue to be either defended or torn down in court. The fact that so little of Nurse's life and personality are interpreted at the site suggests that there is little to know about her life at all, or at least that they are not historically significant to the trials. Again, the accused witches themselves are virtually absent from the story of the witch trials, functioning as the means by which a historical tragedy unfolded. The erasure and underdevelopment of the women involved in the trials, and of Rebecca Nurse in particular at a museum on her own property, when contrasted with male actors like Governor Phips suggests that women's lives and activities are somehow unknowable or less important except by serving as a means by which men like Phips or Samuel Parris affect action and historical change.

Critically, the assumptions about gendered agency and passivity in the PowerPoint presentation were racialized. Besides Nurse, the only named woman in the exhibit was Tituba, identified as the catalyst for the escalation of the scale of the witch trials. According to the presentation, in March, 1692:

⁸⁰¹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

“Three disreputable women are accused of torturing the young children. Eventually, after rigorous interrogation, Tituba, the Parris’s slave, confesses to being forced to joining [sic] the Devil. She also confirms the villagers’ worst fears that there is a conspiracy of witches at work in the village.”⁸⁰²

Although not explicitly scapegoated, Tituba is nevertheless positioned apart from the other white women accused of witchcraft and presented as particularly culpable in the witch trials for confessing to witchcraft. This is despite the fact that, as the Homestead’s interpretation states in the general witchcraft display, a number of individuals cooperated with the judges and identified others as witches. Indeed, the presentation named no other accuser or court official who might be considered responsible for the trials.⁸⁰³ The passages also employ a great deal of passive voice, stating for instance that the “special court of Oyer and Terminer was set up” or Rebecca Nurse “was accused” by unnamed individuals.⁸⁰⁴ This use of language and the ambiguity around the identities of others involved singles out Tituba as an active agent in spinning the witch trials into a hysteria.⁸⁰⁵ Thus, the only woman who exercises any sort of influence over the proceedings appears to be Tituba, a woman of color, who acts as a source of destruction through her false confession. White men like Governor Phips, however, wield power over the law and in politics and ultimately act as agents of order by forcing an end to the witch trials.⁸⁰⁶ This sort of representation affirms white patriarchy as the natural and orderly means of organizing power relations.

⁸⁰² Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁰³ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁰⁴ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁰⁵ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁰⁶ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

Further, by describing Tituba's examination as a "rigorous interrogation," the Homestead euphemizes actual violence by a slave owner against an enslaved woman and in doing so minimizes the brutality inherent in slavery. Robert Calef reported in 1700 that Samuel Parris elicited her confession through beatings, while a physical examination of Tituba's body in 1692 revealed marks taken as evidence of "wounding" by the Devil.⁸⁰⁷ Being more explicit, and more accurate, about Tituba's experiences would necessitate shifting blame away from her and towards the white New Englanders involved. By euphemizing a beating as an "interrogation," this presentation saves white visitors from any real guilt over slavery and presents the enslaved woman, not white supremacy and society's that tolerate slavery as the real danger.⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, the only explicit reference to force or coercion takes place in the realm of the supernatural when Tituba is "forced to joining [sic] the Devil."⁸⁰⁹ Thus, her identification as a slave in the visual presentation serves as a means of identifying her relationship to others involved in the witch trials – akin to being someone's spouse or neighbor – not as a marker of racialized and gendered power relations shaping her treatment by the court and subsequent scapegoating by historians and the general public alike.

Tituba stands in contrast against the only other named woman in the presentation, Rebecca Nurse. The lack of engagement with Tituba's positionality as an enslaved woman and her singular identification as the one who "confirmed" the fears of the

⁸⁰⁷ Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 23-4.

⁸⁰⁸ Site Visit, Rebecca Nurse Homestead, August 5, 2018. According to a 2013 report by the National Park Service, approximately 93% of visitors to Salem are white. <https://www.nps.gov/sama/learn/news/new-report-provides-valuable-insight-on-tourism-and-visitors-to-salem.htm>

⁸⁰⁹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

village, thereby launching the witch trials, creates an ambiguity around her guilt and suggests that she is complicit in the 1692 persecution. When contrasted with Nurse's whiteness, virtue, and explicit statements of innocence, this upholds a dichotomy between white victimhood and blamelessness and a level of threat and moral culpability among people of color for their mistreatment under the legal system. Again, despite the fact that a number of white men and women also implicated others and spread the scale of the witch trials, only Tituba is singled out for such actions.⁸¹⁰ Taken in context with representations of Tituba in tourism as a whole, portrayals such as the one at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead belie Tituba's positionality and her victimization under systems of carceral violence. This perpetuates a general cultural unwillingness to grapple with the ways in which American courts inflict violence on communities of color.⁸¹¹

The lack of specificity in the statement that "three disreputable women" were accused of witchcraft further undermines any intersectional analysis of race and gender in the Salem Witch Trials. Besides Tituba, the other two women first accused of witchcraft were Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, both of whom were white. Identifying these three women as "disreputable" without any nuance or historical context suggests the unequal standards of behavior and legal treatment for white women and women of color. Good and Osborne gained poor reputations due to their transgressive actions, whereas Tituba was counted as "disreputable" because of her ethnicity and enslaved status.⁸¹² Merely collecting Tituba, Good, and Osborne under the label "disreputable" without providing

⁸¹⁰ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸¹¹ See David Cole, *No Equal Justice: Race and Class in the American Criminal Justice System* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999); Johnson et al., *Injustice*.

⁸¹² Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

historical interpretation of the ways in which white women gained poor fame through their actions while indigenous women like Tituba fell under social suspicion for their mere existence as Native naturalizes this racialized distinction rather than challenge it. Again, the presumed white audience does not have to consider the seventeenth-century groundwork being laid for contemporary white supremacy and racialized experiences of the court system.

By 2018, however, the Homestead had removed the audiovisual presentation, relying more on docent-led discussions of witchcraft. This format allows the site to present a coherent, far more nuanced narrative of 1692. It uses the meeting house itself to establish some context for the trials, pointing to the smaller, more recent building for the rural, less populous Salem Village as a manifestation of economic and class distinctions from the more prosperous and densely inhabited Salem Town. The guide also uses the physical space of the house to discuss Puritan culture, for instance by pointing out the lack of decoration as characteristic of Anglican beliefs in devotional simplicity and the centrality of religion to community life, or using the arrangement of hierarchical seating in church to illustrate the stratified nature of colonial society, and how this hierarchy intersected with age, church status, and gender.⁸¹³ The docent situates belief in witchcraft into a simplified but not inaccurate religious context. According to the tour, colonial New Englanders had a fundamentally religious worldview in which phenomena could be attributed to the direct influence of God or the Devil. Therefore, when calamities such as illness or crop failures occurred, people might attribute such disasters to the malefic

⁸¹³ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

influence of witches working on behalf of the Devil. According to the docent, a lack of scientific knowledge exacerbated this tendency to attribute misfortune to divine or diabolic influence rather than a natural cause or happenstance.⁸¹⁴ As Sarah Rivett has shown, however, seventeenth-century New Englanders did not necessarily neatly bifurcate between scientific thinking and religion. Puritan theology developed in conversation with seventeenth-century pursuits of scientific knowledge, often applying new scientific methods to spiritual practices: “ministers developed a particular spiritual science for discerning, authenticating, collecting, and recording invisible knowledge of God as it became manifest in the human soul... Inductive reasoning, recourse to discoveries, the compilation of data, and the testing of a scientific theory through experiment were among the new measurements applied to metaphysics and spiritual study.”⁸¹⁵ In fact, Rivett reads the Salem Witch Trials as an epistemological testing ground inquiring into invisible workings in the natural world, functioning more as “a phase of an emerging Enlightenment modernity” than the last gasp of magical thinking.⁸¹⁶ They are a case of “the application of a rationality that presented new empirical potential, the implications of which late-seventeenth-century people were attempting to grasp.”⁸¹⁷ Perhaps docents could interweave understandings of science and religion in unpacking how Puritans’ views of religion and the natural world informed their views of witchcraft and the Salem Witch Trials in particular.

⁸¹⁴ See Rivett, *Science of the Soul*, 223-270. Scholars have also perpetuated a false distinction between magic and science, however. The seminal text in making this distinction is Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).

⁸¹⁵ Rivett, *Science of the Soul*, 5.

⁸¹⁶ Rivett, *Science of the Soul*, 226.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In contrast to most other tourist sites, the Rebecca Nurse Homestead presents visitors with an image of New England in which the political, social, cultural, and religious were interconnected, with understandings of witchcraft woven into this worldview.⁸¹⁸ Thus, belief in witchcraft is presented as something that the audience can try to understand and connect to, not something “other” that is meant to shock or keep tourists at a distance with its absurdity. However, by focusing so heavily on religious fervor and a lack of scientific knowledge as bases for belief in witchcraft to the exclusion of race, class, and gender in shaping accusations, the Homestead tour presents the tensions that led to the witch trials in ways that occlude these categories of identity as contextual factors for the Salem Witch Trials. Although visitors are asked to sympathize with why parents might fear witchcraft in the face of a child’s illness, they are not asked to engage with how suspicions of witchcraft initially fell on the indigenous Tituba and unruly women like Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. Functionally, visitors are invited to sympathize with anxieties arising from the lack of germ theory more than they are asked to engage with the ways in which Rebecca Nurse’s outspokenness or Tituba’s ethnicity led to community resentment and literal vilification as witches. This seems like a particularly wasted interpretive opportunity to use the Salem Witch Trials to consider the interplay between larger structural issues of race, economics, gender, and religion and the application of these cultural attitudes by individuals and communities.

Having established witchcraft as something comprehensible and widespread in seventeenth-century life, the docent is able to explain the initial claims of bewitchment in

⁸¹⁸ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

a way that does not blame the trials on a bunch of hysterical girls. Instead, the docent explains that the inability of Reverend and Elizabeth Parris, as well as the clergy and doctors called in, to explain the illnesses of the children in their household led to suspicions of witchcraft.⁸¹⁹ Thus, the initial claims of bewitchment are shown to be part of a widespread worldview that accepted bewitchment as one of a range of explanations for events such as an illness. Unable to reach a satisfactory medical explanation, the Parris family and the examining doctor eventually came to believe the girls had been bewitched.⁸²⁰ The guide reiterated this point in the question and answer part of the tour in response to a visitor query about the nature of the girls' afflictions. She argued that the afflictions, while their actual origin cannot be known three hundred years later, were physical and psychological; perhaps Betty's seizures, perhaps the result of epilepsy, triggered a stress response in her cousin, who also resided in the tense, financially-precarious Parris household.⁸²¹ Therefore the girls can only be understood as the catalyst for the Salem Witch Trials in that their symptoms so alarmed and bewildered the adults in their lives that they eventually seized upon bewitchment as an explanation. According to the tour guide, this is a very deliberate effort on the part of the docents to break away from the misogynistic narratives presented elsewhere in Salem tourism that reduce witchcraft accusations to girlish hysterics or malicious teenagers seeking attention and revenge against their neighbors.⁸²²

⁸¹⁹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²⁰ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²¹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²² Rebecca Nurse Homestead, August 2018.

The docents are similarly concerned with not scapegoating Tituba for the escalation of the witch trials.⁸²³ However, representation of Tituba is quite superficial. According to the tour guide, Tituba was among the first to fall under suspicion and the first to confess to witchcraft, although she was not the only one to do so. She also explained that false confessions are not uncommon under intense questioning, and that this was the case with Tituba. Visitors learn that Tituba initially denied the charges against her, but eventually confessed that she hurt the afflicted children under threats by the Devil and that she had worked with the two other suspected women to do so. This confirmed fears that witches were at work in Salem.⁸²⁴ Essentially, visitors learn how Tituba's testimony was perceived by the elite white men of the village and that Tituba was not to blame for the escalation of the witch trials, but in seeking not to scapegoat her, the docent denies Tituba any real individual identity or action.

The ambiguity around Tituba also precludes any engagement with Tituba's enslaved status or the role that her race might have played in her early accusation of witchcraft. For instance, Tituba's ethnicity was not mentioned in the tour; she was identified only as the Parris's slave.⁸²⁵ Depending on tourists' background knowledge, this has the potential to naturalize connections between African Americans and servility while effacing the presence of indigenous persons and indigenous slavery in New England. Further, one might infer that Tituba's status as an enslaved woman and cultural outsider led to her quick identification as a witch, but this is never stated in the

⁸²³ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²⁴ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²⁵ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, August 2018.

interpretation. However, tourists coming from other attractions could just as easily assume that Tituba was a victim of proximity or something she had done. As a result, there is no push for the overwhelmingly white audience to reflect on the seventeenth-century foundations of racialized legal violence and incarceration in the United States. Visitors are asked to feel sympathy for Tituba and view her as innocent, but in such a way that does not produce any discomfort or examination of one's own positionality under the law or public opinion.

The factors leading to witches' accusations is similarly vague when discussing Rebecca Nurse, whose saintly Victorian characterization remains in place. Visitors merely learn that Tituba's confirmation of witches in Salem led to further accusations of people like Nurse. Nurse is identified as being an atypical witchcraft victim for the seventeenth century due to her standing as a "good family woman."⁸²⁶ The only other thing that the audience learns about Nurse is that so many people respected her virtue as a Christian woman that the jury initially found her not guilty at her trial. Only after the afflicted protested that her specter continued to torment did the magistrate ask the jury to re-deliberate. This led to her conviction and execution.⁸²⁷ The only hint of a departure from this hagiographic interpretation of Rebecca Nurse occurs when the docent relates how, once an accusation of witchcraft had been made, her neighbors began to recall an incident three years earlier in which she had had an intense argument with a neighbor who subsequently fell ill and died.⁸²⁸ However, no direct connections are made between

⁸²⁶ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²⁷ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸²⁸ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

this particular argument and Nurse's personality. As a result, a common complaint in tourists' reviews of the Homestead is that they leave with very little sense of Rebecca as a person, and that if they had not already learned about her at other sites in Salem they would not have known who she was from the tour.⁸²⁹ Thus, in reducing Nurse to her "saint but witch victim" characterization, her personality is flattened and any sense of her as an individual person is lost, and the significance of her adherence to class and gender norms before her accusation of witchcraft is diminished.

Interpretation therefore leaves it up to visitors to infer that gendered norms of behavior and misogyny typically played a significant role in determining witchcraft accusations. For instance, if Nurse was an unusual target for her reputation as a good wife and mother as well as her piety, presumably the usual suspects would be women who defied conventional feminine morality. However, visitors do not gain any understanding of what actions and traits would have been considered transgressive and eventually lead to a woman gaining a reputation that made her plausible as a witch, which produces witches as a transhistorical category. Without this gendered context, let alone its intersection with class and race, it appears as if those like Tituba and Rebecca Nurse just happen to be identified as witches. The lack of historical specificity regarding misogyny and gender clouds a clear understanding of witchcraft and precludes any connections to the stigmatization of those who transgress their gender identity in the present.

⁸²⁹ "Rebecca Nurse Homestead," Tripadvisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html

The ambiguity around the process of accusing someone of witchcraft, as well as the near absence of the accusers themselves, suggests an interpretive struggle to balance individual action and agency and avoiding blaming the victim.⁸³⁰ However, at the Rebecca Nurse House and other sites like the Salem Witch Museum, efforts to emphasize the innocence of people like Nurse and Tituba tend to result in their seeming passivity and a flattening of their personalities into inoffensiveness. In an effort to do her “justice” for her descendants, docents emphasize Nurse’s motherliness and faith; fights with her neighbors or any non-idealized personality traits are not.⁸³¹ Similarly, the tour identifies Tituba’s testimony as critical to the progression of the witch trials and states that her confession was coerced, but there is no space given within this framework for Tituba to express agency or resistance. Despite developing a tour based upon a close reading of the trial documents, docents do not give any indication of the ways in which Tituba may have drawn upon Puritan fears of the Devil and supernatural workings to shift judicial attention away from herself and shape Puritan conceptualizations of the diabolic conspiracy at work in Salem.⁸³² There is certainly no suggestion that Tituba, in confirming fears of witchcraft, could have been acting in defiance against the society that enslaved her.⁸³³ This seems to indicate a concern that tourists will not sympathize with women who exercise resentment, or that they might reject an image of Nurse that includes “difficult” personality traits. Thus, while visitors might be willing to move away from a narrative centered on racist and misogynistic assumptions, there is still widespread

⁸³⁰ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, August 2018.

⁸³¹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, August 2018.

⁸³² Breslaw, *Tituba*, xxiv, 107-151.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

cultural discomfort with women who appear as flawed or unpleasant and have the potential to influence or harm others. Ultimately, this affirms toxic notions of “perfect victimhood” in which women, in order to be worthy of sympathy and understanding, must be seen as kind, virtuous, and well-behaved. Women who engaged in criminal behaviors or stepped outside normative, conservative constructions of femininity, by contrast, invite their own victimization in this construction.⁸³⁴

Similarly, docents and interpretive panels portray the afflicted as an indistinct group of people, referred to collectively as “they” with no individual identity. Visitors learn that “they” often suffered from physical injuries of unknown origin and likely were seeing things that they did not understand, leading to faulty eyewitness testimony and shaky accusations in court. Thus, “many people” probably did believe they were seeing diabolic forces and making sincere accusations. Once accusations were raised, neighbors who were not afflicted began to project the suspicion of witchcraft back to odd events and coincidences that had happened years before without necessarily any malicious intent.⁸³⁵ As noted above, rendering the afflicted girls sympathetic by rendering them passive effaces any actual power they wielded over courts and communities through their accusations and testimonies in court.⁸³⁶ The girls become figures of sympathy because they suffered from an illness, be it physical or psychological, and deferred to the

⁸³⁴ Jan Jordan, “Perfect Victims, Perfect Policing? Improving Rape Complainants’ Experiences of Police Investigations,” *Public Administration* 86 (2008), 699-719; Nastassja Schmledt and A. Lea Roth, “Hunting for the Perfect Victim,” *Huffington Post*; November 22, 2016, accessed online; Keir Starmer, “In Sexual Assault Cases, The Idea of the ‘Perfect Victim’ is Pernicious,” *The Guardian* August 7, 2015, accessed online.

⁸³⁵ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸³⁶ Karlens, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*; Demos, *Entertaining Satan*; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

authority of the adults in their lives who acted on their behalf. By contrast, the girls become figures of scorn and fear at other sites when they transgress patriarchal norms by speaking out of turn and taking on accusatory power for themselves. The adult men who made accusations, suffered bewitchments, and spread rumors of witchcraft receive no such interpretive attention or condemnation.

The depersonalization of the afflicted and accusers in conjunction with an interpretive emphasis on the initial afflicted girls also sidesteps addressing anxieties about patriarchy and patriarchal error. As noted above, Governor Phips and the attorney general who halted the witch trials occupy the central role in interpretation at the Homestead. Their representation conforms to a traditional view of heroic masculinity in which men exercise power (moral, political, and legal) over others in order to right a wrong and defend the vulnerable women unable to defend themselves in court. Visitors do not learn about the men who participated in the trials as deponents, accusers, or victims. These men have the potential to raise anxieties about patriarchal prerogatives and a cultural tendency to depict male actions as heroic. In Salem, however, male privilege and the heroic arc are dangerously misapplied and result in the victimization of the socially vulnerable. This narrative indicates an anxiety about the fallibility of patriarchy and male actors. This also centers discussions of culpability in the outbreak of the witch trials on what women and girls did or did not to; men taking similar courses of action or legitimizing the accusations of female dependents by filing a formal legal action in court are not represented, let alone held to similar standards of behavior. Rather than interrogate patriarchy as a complex social structure and engage with its application past

and present, visitors hear familiar narrative of male rationality and virtue that naturalize male privilege.

The Homestead interpretation in 2018 did not deploy the sexist and racist scapegoating of Tituba and the afflicted children and instead presented an alternative narrative in which witchcraft should be understood as the result of an entire household and community in crisis in a world that believed in the real, direct influence of divine or diabolic influence. Given an explanation that situates the individuals involved in the witch trials in a larger historical context of religious belief, economic uncertainty, and stressors such as childhood illness makes it difficult to reduce their origin to a single individual or group of girls.⁸³⁷ Further, they challenge the scapegoating elsewhere in Salem not merely by fact-checking visitors or just informing them that what they know about the witch trials is wrong, but by presenting a coherent interpretation of 1692, which visitors can engage with and measure their own presuppositions against. Led by a skilled interpreter, the informational content and conversational nature of a docent-led tour thus has the potential to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of 1692 and lead visitors to question the misinformation and scapegoating present elsewhere in Salem.

Overall, interpretation at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead could go further in their engagement with race, colonialism, and misogyny. Although the tour guides try not to replicate the scapegoating of Tituba and the afflicted girls that dominate understandings of 1692, they do not actually critique the underlying assumptions about gender and ethnicity that make these narratives so popular. Thus, the tours are not actively racist or

⁸³⁷ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, August 2018.

sexist but they do little to challenge systematic racism and sexism themselves. For instance, the docent says that Tituba, one of the first to be accused and to confess, should not be held responsible for the witch trials, but does not explain why exactly she fell under suspicion so quickly and has been maligned ever since.⁸³⁸ This less-confrontational approach may make visitors less defensive and more open to a version of history that may contradict their existing knowledge, but this lack of engagement with misogynistic and racialized power dynamics prevents visitors from making connections with these issues in the present. Ultimately, this constitutes a hollow, passive form of progressivism that seeks to correct a racist, sexist conclusion without confronting the systemic inequalities that led to the problematic assumption, historically and in the present.

Rebecca Nurse, Housewife

Even with the overhaul of the witchcraft presentation, the domestic life of the Nurse family remains the core of interpretation at the Homestead. This portion of the guided tour conforms narrowly to a traditional historic house model of interpretation not far removed from its Colonial Revival origins at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸³⁹ Visitors begin in the yard, where they learn that the Nurse family began renting the property in 1678 and that, despite dividing up the property to provide for their four sons, the family continued to work the farm collectively. The family worked hard,

⁸³⁸ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸³⁹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

and the sons of Rebecca and her husband Francis were able to purchase the property outright after the deaths of their parents.⁸⁴⁰

Once in the house, docents use reconstructions of colonial household goods to demonstrate how the structure would have been utilized in the seventeenth century. In the hall, for instance, visitors learn about the labor-intensive process of baking and textile production, as well as the necessity of the entire household, including children, contributing to the survival of the family. In the bedroom, the docent informs visitors of how entire families shared the same room and the same beds, how cold the house would be in the winter, and why chamber pots would have been necessary at night.⁸⁴¹ Rebecca Nurse herself is nowhere in this narrative. Only knowing that the property belonged to the Nurse family distinguishes the domestic side of the tour from any other colonial house museum along the East Coast.

This lack of personal specificity undermines the potential of the Homestead to represent a witchcraft victim as a person rather than a symbol and push back against the reduction of Nurse to a caricature of feminine virtue. By representing her active role in the home and church, interpreters could construct Nurse's image more along the lines of how she would have thought about herself. To do so, interpreters could draw directly upon court documentation, conversion narratives (in which Puritans confessed rigorous soul-searching before their congregations in order to attain full membership in church), and the work of scholars such as Elizabeth Reis, who examines Puritan women's spiritual

⁸⁴⁰ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁴¹ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

lives and the degree to which they internalized misogynistic constructions of femininity.⁸⁴² However, as noted above, docents portray Nurse in highly positive, generic terms that flatten out any sense of individuality, thereby undermining the interpretive potential of discussing Nurse's life in her own home. Indeed, much of the tour is given in the second person. "You," the visitor, would have performed certain tasks or experienced cold winters in the seventeenth century, further pushing Nurse out of the narrative of her own life. Indeed, a common complaint about the Homestead on sites like TripAdvisor is that there is little sense of Rebecca at the site. For instance, one commenter wanted "more of Rebecca" while another noted that there was "not much actually on Rebecca" and that "luckily [she] knew who she was from visiting Salem because they never actually mention who she was on this tour."⁸⁴³ This lack of specificity reduces Nurse's historical complexity, and the complexity of colonial women's experiences in general, suggesting that female experiences were more or less interchangeable and disconnected from the wider world. Nurse is reduced to an archetype once again, in this case as a hard-scrabble colonial housewife. At the same time, the near total absence of Nurse's husband Francis and their sons in the domestic space belies the deep interconnectedness of gendered labor and household with community and economy. This further removes women, and Nurse specifically, from the larger history of the region through an anachronistic divide between gendered realms of public and private. The historic house model made available by the

⁸⁴² See Reis, *Damned Women* and also Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 157.

⁸⁴³ Leppardlady, "Liked to Hear More About Rebecca," TripAdvisor, June 25, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g41519-d1591153-r496029928-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html; hiashley1987, "Good Information," TripAdvisor, June 27, 2017. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g41519-d1591153-r496517164-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html

survival of the Nurse property means that Rebecca Nurse's life could be interpreted in its entirety.⁸⁴⁴ Instead, Nurse remains a series of labels – wife, mother, witch – with no sense of how she herself occupied those aspects of her identity.

As David Thelen and Roy Rosenszweig have theorized, one of the principal advantages of historic house museums is that visitors tend to read them, and the narratives presented at them, as more authentic because they provide an “unmediated experience with authentic objects” in “authentic” environments, or at least appear to.⁸⁴⁵ However, in practice, the determination of what is “authentic” can be fraught at historic house museums. This is particularly the case for the Rebecca Nurse House, which reads as particularly authoritative and “real” in contrast with overtly commercialized sites in Salem with little or no direct connection to the past. At the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, a narrow focus on the functions of various pieces of material culture legitimize a comfortably traditional view of gender roles past and present. The failure to complicate these roles, as well as their general acceptance by the public, indicates a desire for, or at least a complacency with, gendered norms of behavior in which women remain a step removed from public spaces and are confined to familiar tasks like minding the children and cooking. Indeed, the primary difference between colonial and contemporary life on the Homestead tour seems to be the degree of difficulty in baking bread or the literal nature of children being “tied to their mother’s apron strings,” not the cultural, economic, or political meanings attached to this work. The tour guide anchors her explanations of

⁸⁴⁴ See the Rebecca Nurse biography by her descendent, Charles Tapley. Tapley, *Rebecca Nurse*.

⁸⁴⁵ Rosenszweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 21-22. See also Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums* and Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*.

seventeenth-century life with material culture. For instance, to demonstrate housewives' practicality in childrearing, the docent pulls down a child's chair from where it hangs on the wall in the kitchen when not actively in use, describes how mothers could place their children there to keep them occupied and out of her way when working, or, when flipped upside down, could use it as a walker to stabilize a toddler learning to walk.⁸⁴⁶

By incorporating more of the Nurses' lives instead of just replicas of their belongings, interpreters could reframe the domestic space to interrogate instead of naturalize white patriarchal social organization. For instance, by integrating the incident where Nurse berated her neighbors for allowing their livestock to roam into her yard, interpreters could undermine the Victorian conflation of her identity as a good housewife with passivity.⁸⁴⁷ This could also integrate the Homestead into a wider community and connect women's labor to the sort of domestic, interpersonal tensions that contributed to witchcraft accusations. Contrasting the family model of labor practiced by the Nurse's with the slave-holding Parris household just down the road could allow for greater discussion of slavery and the foundations of white supremacy in New England. Docents could also discuss an incident in 1674 in which an impoverished mother abandoned her four year old daughter to Rebecca's care when she left town after the death of her husband.⁸⁴⁸ This could be used to discuss dangers of the intersections of gender, economics, and motherhood in a way that is genuinely critical of the ways in which patriarchy made or broke women's ability to support themselves while also disrupting

⁸⁴⁶ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁴⁷ Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 92.

⁸⁴⁸ See Marilynne Roach, *Six Women of Salem: The Untold Story of the Accused and Their Accusers in the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2013).

notions of maternal behavior and who gets to (or wants to) parent. By incorporating specifics from Nurse's life and anchoring them to the material culture of the house, interpreters could use this authenticity to make connections between Nurse's life, the life of the village, and points of identity in ways that critique the embeddedness of gendered and racialized systems of power in American life instead of naturalizing them within a banal image of colonial domesticity.

The Witch House

Like the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, the Witch House is marketed as an educational, historic house museum, in this case operated under the auspices of Salem's Park, Recreation and Community Services, which oversees municipal parks, administers public programming, and manages service organizations such as the local community center.⁸⁴⁹ According to the Witch House website, "through examination of family life, architecture and furniture of the seventeenth century, visitors gain a deeper comprehension of the people involved in the Witch Trials and an enriched understanding of America's colonial heritage...At the Witch House we offer the latest research and scholarship on how the trials began and the circumstances that brought them to an end."⁸⁵⁰ Docents and interpretive panels do draw upon witchcraft scholarship and histories of Puritan folk practices to integrate the history of the witch trials with economic, cultural, and domestic lives of colonists, seeking to contextualize the witch

⁸⁴⁹ "The Witch House," City of Salem, <https://www.salem.com/witch-house>

⁸⁵⁰ "History," The Witch House, accessed September 5, 2018, <https://www.thewitchhouse.org/>.

trials and render them comprehensible to visitors. For instance, the museum interprets folk remedies, noting in one interpretive panel that “worries over the illnesses of children” linked early cases of Salem witchcraft. Ministers prayed and physicians administered medicines to try to remedy the children.⁸⁵¹ Subsequent informational panels highlight the intersection of domestic life, religion, magic, and healing; the fireplace placard describes how women used it for cooking but also describes various food superstitions.⁸⁵² In doing so, the museum draws upon material culture, the seventeenth-century setting, and transcribed primary sources to counter the sexist and racist narratives found elsewhere in Salem. However, the site still struggles to engage with the structural nature of race and gender relations. In the case of Tituba particularly, this shortcoming perpetuates the erasure of indigenous persons and minimizes New England slavery.

Curation splits interpretation a bit between more mundane aspects of colonial living on the second floor and witchcraft and magic on the ground floor, where tours of the house begin. The first room visitors enter provides an overview of the 1692 witch trials. The museum locates the beginning of the trials with the Parris family’s response to the “very strange behavior” exhibited by the children of the household. After the physician they summoned diagnosed an ““evil hand”” over the girls, the rest of the Village involved themselves in seeking out who had bewitched the children. As a result, “three women are named as being the girls’ tormentors. Tituba, the Parris family slave, Sarah Good, a beggarly woman, and Sarah Osbourne.”⁸⁵³ Critically, interpreters shift the

⁸⁵¹ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁵² The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁵³ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

first mention of Tituba until after the beginning of the accusations. In doing so, they distance Tituba from the upheaval in the Parris household that she's typically blamed for and instead the focus on the outbreak of the trials is fixed squarely on the actions of the adult, white Salem community as a whole.

In the second room of the tour, the foyer space around the front door of the house, the museum presents a display explicitly titled "Tituba's Innocence." Here, visitors learn that generations of writers have accused her of beginning the Salem Witch Trials with magical rites and stories brought from Barbados, but that recent scholarship has proven these theories false.⁸⁵⁴ Instead, Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne stood accused of the same activities, namely, bewitching children and flying. Further, the only act of magic associated with the Parris household in contemporary records was the creation of the witch cake. Such acts of counter-magic were firmly within English tradition. In 1692 Mary Sibley, a white, respected member of the Village church ordered Tituba and her husband to bake such a cake.⁸⁵⁵ Facsimiles and a transcript of Tituba's examination by Judge John Hathorne is displayed nearby so visitors can read for themselves what Tituba was accused of and what she actually confessed to.⁸⁵⁶ Thus, the Witch House seeks not only to correct misassumptions about Tituba, but to prove them wrong. This approach seems critical, given the ways in which tourists seem to have internalized the first narratives about Salem, usually from *The Crucible*, that they were exposed to. As noted above, visitors tend to view many of the theories they are familiar with as equally valid

⁸⁵⁴ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁵⁵ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁵⁶ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

unless the interpreter is able to present counter-arguments in some detail.⁸⁵⁷ Stating Tituba's innocence explicitly draws upon the institutional authority of a museum setting to establish it as a historically grounded fact rather than a nebulous alternate theory or story visitors should reject.⁸⁵⁸ Engaging with historical evidence directly reinforces the historicity of docents' argument, which along with docent-led conversation, allows visitors to test their knowledge and engage with a new idea instead of presenting them with a simple point to accept or reject.

This exhibit also points to the disparity between the treatment of white women and women of color by their communities and court systems. In the "Witch Cake" panel, for instance, visitors learn that despite being the person to instigate the use of counter-magic, Mary Sibley only suffered a public rebuke in church from Reverend Parris. Similarly, despite being accused of the same acts of witchcraft at the same time, only Tituba continued to be viewed as guilty in acts of witchcraft and blameworthy for the escalation of the trials after they had ended.⁸⁵⁹ The Salem Witch Trials appear not only as a legal injustice, but an injustice perpetrated along racialized lines. White supremacy has been demonstrably embedded in American legal culture from its beginnings in the seventeenth century.

However, the interpretation of the witch trials and of Tituba herself dances around the issue of her race and never actually addresses why she was singled out for blame. This seems like a critical oversight, particularly given a nearby panel that asks, "Why are

⁸⁵⁷ Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁵⁸ See Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.

⁸⁵⁹ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018.

the Witch Trials important today?” It posits that “throughout history, when one group perceives a danger or threat from another group, mankind is capable of great cruelty to nullify or remove that threat.”⁸⁶⁰ To an extent, visitors are then asked to reflect upon instances of identity-based violence in contemporary life: “From the ongoing persecution of child ‘witches’ in Africa, to global terrorism, to classroom and cyber bullying we are still surrounded with events that marginalize the group or individual, through acts of violence and domination.”⁸⁶¹ However, by highlighting examples like witchcraft in Africa and “global terrorism” rather than the Islamophobia that has followed it, the panel removes the viewer from any complicity in perpetrating such domination as well as any immediacy of its consequences.

To read this panel, visitors are literally and metaphorically surrounded by such marginalization and domination as exemplified by Tituba’s treatment in 1692 and her subsequent scapegoating. The “Tituba’s Innocence” panel states that Tituba has been wrongly blamed for the outbreak of the witch trials on the basis of erroneous assumptions about her spellcasting, despite the fact that she was tried for the same crimes as two white women.⁸⁶² It does not say anything about how these later stories and scapegoating resulted from racist power structures that facilitated the victimization of an indigenous woman. As noted above, the “Witch Cake” panel notes that Mary Sibley, despite being the person who ordered the creation of the cake, only had to “apologize to the congregation for her ‘transgression’” without ever suffering allegations of witchcraft.⁸⁶³

⁸⁶⁰ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁶¹ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁶² The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁶³ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

The disparity between the treatment of an upper-class white woman under the law and social repute, despite the greater wrongdoing, and Tituba, a woman of color who suffered disproportionately for a white woman's crime, is never made textual. As in the case of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, the Witch House presents a narrative that seeks to avoid sexist and racist stereotypes but is unwilling to engage with the systemic inequalities it implicitly condemns. Avoiding explicit discussions of Tituba's race and contextualizing her presence in New England has the effect of presenting the history of people of color as "subordinate knowledge" to white-centric regimes of knowledge – in the seventeenth-century material and its contemporary interpretation – as well as its confinement to one particular area of the house that visitors might "choose to see or ignore," as noted by Eichstedt and Small.⁸⁶⁴

By explicitly engaging with the racism and misogyny underlying Tituba's characterization in American culture, the museum could create more immediate connections to contemporary issues of racism and carceral violence towards people of color and provoke greater introspection in the majority white touristic audience, particularly after a day consuming such racist stereotyping as recreation at other Salem attractions. This would also directly tie in to the stated goal of the museum, to grapple with "domination and violence" in American culture and take meaningful steps towards being able to "learn from the lessons of 1692 Salem and respond to our modern and changing world more favorably."⁸⁶⁵ By avoiding the work of making connections

⁸⁶⁴ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations*, 9-10.

⁸⁶⁵ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

between white patriarchy past and present and pointing towards the ways in which white visitors themselves participate in this system, the Witch House engages in a form of privilege that allows white people to avoid thinking about inequality, thereby ensuring its continuance. According to an informational interview, the majority of visitors continue to enter the museum believing that Tituba was Black.⁸⁶⁶ Despite this, and despite general interpretive efforts to restore Tituba's humanity, her ethnicity is never addressed in the exhibits. It is therefore entirely likely that tourists will leave the museum still laboring under this misconception, with the museum having tacitly validated it. By not challenging this assumption, the Witch House perpetuates white people's beliefs about Black servility and effaces the presence of indigenous slavery in New England.

While placing an interpretive emphasis on challenging Tituba's scapegoating is necessary, the Witch House does so to the exclusion of any interpretation of her as an individual or any discussion of New England as a multi-ethnic landscape. Most obviously, by actually engaging with Tituba's identity as an indigenous woman, interpreters could center the presence of indigenous persons in New England and locate indigenous slavery alongside other forms of colonial violence, including the frontier wars with the Abenaki that stoked community anxieties in 1692 and may have contributed to immediately suspecting the two Indians living in the Parris household.⁸⁶⁷ Similarly, Tituba was not the only enslaved woman living in the area or to suffer witchcraft accusations; Candy and Mary Black were African slaves who are nearly entirely erased

⁸⁶⁶ Informational Interview, The Witch House, September 17, 2018.

⁸⁶⁷ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 20-58.

from Salem's interpretive landscape. Some indication of this would lessen the otherizing of Tituba in tourist narratives, combat notions of New England as inherently white, and engage with the multiple layers of colonial violence that existed alongside one another and built the United States. Although not a lot of information about Tituba survives, interpreters could point to details like the birth and death of an infant daughter, her relocation from Barbados to Massachusetts, or close readings of her trial documents illustrating her intelligence and agency, as modeled by Elaine Breslaw.⁸⁶⁸ By focusing so closely on Tituba's words, docents could capture both the pressures she faced as an enslaved woman as well as the ways in which she drew upon her own cultural background and her knowledge of the Puritans to craft her testimony. Further, the lack of a documentary record could also serve as an interpretive tool to emphasize the ways in which historical hierarchies of race and gender minimized her presence in written records. Modern scholars have perpetuated such inequities by developing histories premised on the superiority of white men, only recently challenging Tituba's scapegoating. Thus, by developing Tituba as a person in her historical context, Tituba might be afforded some rare dignity in Salem, and the Witch House could contribute towards a less white, more complex understanding of the region's past.

While Tituba is more or less defined by what she did *not* do, the Witch House allows white women a bit more individual personhood, gesturing towards the range of women's work and women's experiences in the seventeenth century by interpreting a range of women and female activities. For example, in a small exhibit about colonial

⁸⁶⁸ See Breslaw, *Tituba*.

medicine, the museum introduces Lady Montague as an eighteenth-century traveler who introduced Europe to various medical, natural, and cultural practices that she encountered while residing in the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶⁹ In 2016, the museum exhibited a small display about Elizabeth Corwin, whose husband Judge Jonathan Corwin owned the house in 1692. Using facsimiles of a handwritten book of saints in which she had also written personal notes and observations, the museum illustrated Elizabeth's life as a woman of property and financial acumen. For instance, she listed financial transactions, records of the property she inherited from her mother, financial plans for her widowhood, loans she arranged for her husband, as well as a notation about being able to manage their investments better than Jonathan. They also used Elizabeth to illustrate tensions between individual agency, given Elizabeth's skills and inheritance as an upper-class woman, as well as her self-confidence, and gendered structural inequalities, such as the fact that Jonathan ultimately had ownership and final say over their finances and the property she had brought to their marriage.⁸⁷⁰ Elsewhere on the second floor, visitors also learn about Elizabeth's marriage, her experiences in childbirth, and typical domestic tasks like textile production.⁸⁷¹ In contrast to sites like the Rebecca Nurse House, where Nurse more or less disappears into a recitation of cooking and childrearing, this exhibit gave Elizabeth historical specificity within that domestic framework through the inclusion of more details about her particular experiences. Further, the exhibit on folk magic and food superstitions connect women's activities in the kitchen with larger Puritan views on

⁸⁶⁹ The Witch House, August 2018.

⁸⁷⁰ The Witch House, September 2016.

⁸⁷¹ The Witch House, September 2016.

religion and the metaphysical.⁸⁷² At the same time, men are not removed from the domestic space. For instance, one sign interprets their joint use of the parlor while another presents the production and consumption of textiles as a principal financial concern for both marriage partners.⁸⁷³ Thus, gendered activities and concerns are shown as interdependent, with women and men active within and without of the domestic space.

The Witch House thereby presents white women as engaged in a range of activities and, despite living within a patriarchal power structure, exercising agency. According an informational interview, in the future, the museum might include more information on Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, two poor women in Salem Village, in addition to Tituba.⁸⁷⁴ If this does indeed going forward, the museum could complicate understandings of colonial woman even further by including some discussion of classed female activity, particularly as it intersects with race and enslaved status. As it stands, however, agency and historical specificity remain the preserve of elite white women like Elizabeth Corwin and Lady Montague.

Ultimately, the Witch House presents a more critical narrative of the witch trials that centers the historical narrative on women and deconstructs much of the racism surrounding Tituba. Its interpretive content perhaps reveals a willingness to engage the lives of women and build interpretation around their experiences.⁸⁷⁵ However, by marginalizing discussions of misogyny, slavery, and race, they present a narrative that

⁸⁷² The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁷³ The Witch House, September 2016 and August 2018

⁸⁷⁴ Informational Interview, Witch House, Salem, Massachusetts, September 17, 2018.

⁸⁷⁵ See Foy Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*; West, *Domesticating History*.

allows visitors to feel good about engaging with histories of women and people of color without having to grapple with the systems of inequality that produced them, let alone their own places in those systems.

Conclusion

Overall, Essex Heritage, the Witch House, and the Rebecca Nurse Homestead work to revise the narrative of 1692 in Salem tourism and to push back against the longevity and popularity of sexist and racist explanations for the crisis that underpin so much of the popular view of the Salem Witch Trials. These non-profits emphasize a scholarly discourse that foregrounds primary source interpretation and historiography in order to legitimize a view of the witch trials as a regional crisis of religion, economics, politics, and warfare rather than the result of peculiarly guilty white girls and Tituba. However, much of this interpretation focuses on context to a degree that loses sight of the individual women involved. Similarly, while curators and tour guides have jettisoned the racist and misogynistic narratives centering Tituba and white women as the cause of the witch trials, they have not really replaced them with developed interpretations that would allow these women to retain historical complexity.

These historic sites also don't develop systemic issues of gender in racial inequality, which would fit into the contextual emphasis of their interpretation at these sites. Drawing these connections with visitors could create links between the past and present in ways that fit with the "making sure this never happens again" narrative of Salem interpretation, particularly at the Witch House. Museum scripts minimize slavery

in New England as well as the presence of indigenous persons, often emphasizing that Tituba was an outsider without further context or development. This denaturalizes Massachusetts as a multi-racial space. It also minimizes the role of patriarchy as a social force that led to the disproportionate number of women accused and shaped how male actors understood their responsibilities under the law and in protecting their communities and households.

While interrupting racist and sexist understandings of the witch trials is an important factor in structuring museum scripts for docents and curators behind the scenes in Salem, actually grappling with these on a systemic level seems to be a source of anxiety in itself for white audiences, docents, and educators at non-profit attractions. Ultimately, these sites offer comfortably conciliatory approaches to gender and race, crafting tours and exhibits that are less overtly misogynistic and racist than much of the surrounding tourist industry without truly engaging with systemic issues. As a result, these museums compartmentalize these issues and seem to position them as unique to time or to particular individuals when disconnected from the rest of the context for 1692. It seems that given how much museum scripts place an emphasis on the role of class or age in witchcraft accusations already, they might incorporate gender as an important contextual factor for the witch trials as well. This kind of minimization of racialized and gendered violence risks inhibiting visitors' ability to recognize the continuities of these issues in contemporary American culture as well as their own positionality in relation to these forms of power.

Chapter Five

Haunted by Heritage: The Presence of the Past in Historical and Paranormal Walking Tours

Introduction

With the exception of the Witch House, there are no extant structures in Salem with direct ties to the witch trials, hence the need to build purpose-built attractions like the Salem Witch Museum to attract tourism.⁸⁷⁶ Historical and paranormal walking tours of the downtown area, which would have been the heart of Salem Town in 1692, attempt to mediate this lack of “authentic” sites by guiding visitors around the former locations of sites like the prison, the meeting house, judges’ homes, Bridget Bishop’s orchard, or a church originally founded by Philip English.⁸⁷⁷ Guides often take a conversational approach, inviting visitors to interact with their narrative and the particular location they are using to anchor it. Walking tours further encourage a sense of direct connection with the past through encounters with actual personages from the witch trials. Tours stop at the grave of Judge Hathorne, for instance, as well as the witchcraft memorial, which stands in for the graves of the twenty executed. Ghost tours, depending on one’s beliefs, afford the potential for an even more direct interaction with the past by suggesting that tourists might meet with the ghost of Hathorne standing over his tomb, catch the scent of apples from Bridget Bishop’s orchard, or catch sight of Giles Corey returning to Salem as an

⁸⁷⁶ There are a few first period homes in Salem operated by the Park Service or under private ownership, but their inhabitants do not have direct ties to the witch trials, and the homes are not interpreted in that context. The city does retain a number of well-preserved eighteenth- and nineteenth-century homes that operate as historic house museums, private residences, and stops on broader historical tours of Salem as well as ghost tours.

⁸⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of authenticity and commercialism in Salem, see DeRosa, *The Making of Salem*.

omen of ill-fortune. Both paranormal and historical tour guides also emphasize their research process, often citing particular court documents as evidence (or passing around spirit photography on ghost tours) to build confidence in the authenticity of their content. Guides do not name names but they sometimes refer to things people might have heard around town before offering a corrective. In this way, walking tours construct a layered sense of connection to the witch trials, first by relating stories about them near where key events took place, answering and posing questions to the tour group to facilitate direct engagement with the narrative itself, offering a meta-narrative on the development of the tourist industry writ large, and staging possible encounters with the ghosts of 1692, both literally and figuratively (through mentions of similar scapegoating and superstitious thinking in modern life).

The Tours

These walking tours vary greatly by company, by guide, and by the interests of each particular tour group. “The Salem Morning Stroll,” for instance, is a two-hour tour operated by a single individual who offers a wide-ranging history of the city from initial colonization through the early twentieth century. As discussed below, the guide’s discussion of the Salem Witch Trials seems grounded in scholarship and offers interpretations of Tituba and the afflicted children that challenge the stereotyping associated with them in the edutainment attractions of Chapters Two and Three. It is a strictly historical tour that frames the 1692 witchcraft crisis as a historical tragedy rather

than a spooky thrill.⁸⁷⁸ A single tour company, Salem Historical Tours, operates the “1692 Witchcraft Walk” and the “Haunted Footsteps” ghost walk, employing multiple tour guides who put their own spin on tour scripts.⁸⁷⁹ The “1692 Witchcraft Walk” takes visitors through the course of the Salem Witch Trials from the stresses and preconditions in seventeenth-century Massachusetts that contributed to the outbreak of the hysteria through their conclusion. It also emphasizes individuals such as Bridget Bishop, as the original site of her property is located in downtown Salem. The rigor of the historical interpretation varies by tour guide.⁸⁸⁰ The “Bewitched After Dark” tour employs multiple guides billed as “local Salem Historians” on its Facebook page, although both tours that I took in 2016 and 2018 were with the same guide, and offers a detailed examination of the witch trials as well as a commentary on the development of Salem’s tourist industry and its current operations.⁸⁸¹ The “Bewitched After Dark” tours advanced an argument about the witch trials as a through-line for the tour that visitors can engage with. The guide argued that the Salem Witch Trials cannot be reduced to a single cause – economic uncertainty, religious tensions, and political instability all contributed – but particularly greedy men among Salem’s upper classes capitalized on the outbreak of witchcraft accusations to aggrandize themselves, escalating the scale of the crisis.⁸⁸² The degree to

⁸⁷⁸ “The Salem Morning Stroll,” Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018; “The Salem Morning Stroll,” <https://www.sinisterstoriesofsalem.com/salem-morning-stroll/>

⁸⁷⁹ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018; “Haunted Footsteps,” Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018; “Salem Historical Tours,” Salem Historical Tours, <https://www.salemhistoricaltours.com/>

⁸⁸⁰ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁸¹ “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018; “About Us” Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/pg/BewitchedAfterDark/about/?ref=page_internal

⁸⁸² “Bewitched After Dark,” Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016 and August 2018.

which this framing accords with scholarship is discussed below. Guides across these historic tour companies also typically refer to “common misconceptions,” like burning versus hanging as a mode of execution, and information tourists “might have heard” around Salem, offering a corrective in their own tour content.

Paranormal tours also vary widely in content, with stories involving the Witch Trials in 1692 and spirits associated with them since. The “Haunted Footsteps” tour, for instance, relates only ghost stories and focuses more on supernatural stories of 1692, such as spectral chains rattling on the site of the old prison, Giles Corey appearing as an omen, or curses by accused witches.⁸⁸³ Similarly, the Black Cat’s “Ghostly Night Tours,” operated by a pair, focus on ghost stories, but relate a brief history of the Salem Witch Trials as well.⁸⁸⁴ A walk with the “Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts” tour, operated by a single guide, encompasses macabre stories of ghosts, witches, voodoo, vampires, and the Boston Strangler.⁸⁸⁵ The “Hocus Pocus” tour is also operated by a single individual and discusses a variety of stories associated with witchcraft and the macabre with a particularly jaunty narration style. Stops on the tour range from the sites of historic murders, sites associated with the filming of *Hocus Pocus* and *Bewitched*, to the witchcraft memorial, prisons, and allegedly haunted houses, narrating both historical information and supernatural goings-on.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸³ “Haunted Footsteps,” Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018.

⁸⁸⁴ “Black Cat Tour,” Salem, Massachusetts, September 2016; “What We Do,” Black Cat Tours, <https://www.blackcatsalem.com/about>

⁸⁸⁵ “Spellbound Tours,” Site Visit, Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018; “Your Guide,” Spellbound Tours, <https://spellboundtours.com/>

⁸⁸⁶ “Hocus Pocus,” September 2016; “Hocus Pocus Tours” Hocus Pocus Tours, <https://hocuspocustours.com/>

Walking tours' reliance on many of the same tour stops and interpretation of 1692 period allows for comparison. Overall, the walking tour format seems to allow more balance between individual agency and historical context, particularly on the history tours where guides typically relate overarching social, political, economic, and cultural factors with the overall course of the trials and the actions of individuals and communities throughout their interpretation. These tours also broaden the gendering of the categories of actors in the witch trials by including more men among the accusers and afflicted and expanding the role of elite men in driving the trials forward while also allowing for further incorporation of the women accused of witchcraft. In general, walking tours usually engage in a more explicit discussion of power in 1692, emphasizing the ways in which men with an outsized amount of legal, social, economic, and political influence could manipulate colonial institutions for their own ends, both in terms of personal gain and sincere belief in witchcraft. These tours also include some discussion of gendered power dynamics and overall seem more willing than the edutainment museums to engage with misogyny as a factor in witchcraft accusations. However, while walking tours typically narrate 1692 in ways that condemn abuses of power, the degree to which they engage with issues of misogyny, racism, and class as similarly systemic contextual factors varies widely.

As will be discussed in more detail below, historical walking tours tend to bring up classed anxieties about relationships of power, centering the ability of white male elites to use institutions against the most socially vulnerable – the impoverished, women, the enslaved. With varying degrees of success, guides also tend to be more nuanced and

compassionate towards the afflicted girls and Tituba, seeking to balance individual agency and motives for their roles in the witch trials with their positionality in the colonial social hierarchy. While these walks criticize men who abuse their power and the results for marginalized groups, they do so without engaging very explicitly with white patriarchy as a systemic set of power relations or in a way that would encourage the dismantling of it in the present; tourists see that particular men manipulated the system to their advantage but do not hear directly about how the institutional inequality that allowed them to do so persisted. Instead, guides make jokes broadly about how “nothing has changed” when it comes to greed and political corruption. Further, guides tend to interpret misogyny in a way that confines it to the past. While tours condemn Puritans’ misogyny and frame accused witches’ outspokenness as empowering, they also do not engage with issues of feminism or racial equity. Tours discuss how “things were rough for women back then” and women “used to be second class citizens” but then elide any continuities in gendered power from conversations about the legacies of 1692 and what the guides hope visitors will take away from their experience in Salem.

It seems that tour companies could complicate their constructions of patriarchy with reference to scholarship on Anglo-American gender. As will be shown below, most guides tend to frame colonial gender relations along the lines of English historian Lawrence Stone’s definition of patriarchy from 1977, as the “despotic authority of father and husband” that was “oppressive in its completeness” in English culture between 1500 and 1700.⁸⁸⁷ Subsequently, patriarchy weakened as affective individualism reshaped

⁸⁸⁷ Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Penguin, 1977).

social relations and power in the modern era.⁸⁸⁸ Gender historians have reworked this formulation of patriarchy in several ways. First, historians argue that patriarchal control has never been complete, and stress contestation and personal agency within patriarchy as a system. Second, they problematize the conceptualization of patriarchy as a unidirectional system of oppression in which men control women. Instead, scholars have increasingly considered the ways in which patriarchy shaped intra-gender relations. Patriarchy has increasingly been conceptualized as a system that influenced constructions of masculinity and shaped classed homosocial behavior. Third, although many gender historians are also occupied with locating a dividing line between the early modern and the modern in gender relations, they tend to stress that this transition merely rearticulated the ways in which patriarchy functioned. Patriarchy did not vanish after the colonial period, but rather the mechanisms by which it operates changed.⁸⁸⁹ As discussed below, tour guides could draw upon this formulation of gender and patriarchy in complicating their interpretations of misogyny and women's history in the seventeenth century.

With few exceptions, walking tours do little more than correct Tituba's racial misidentification in popular culture and push back to varying degrees against scapegoating her for instigating the witch trials. The "Bewitched After Dark" tour, for instance, offers one of the stronger interpretations of Tituba. First, the guide identifies

⁸⁸⁸ See Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England*.

⁸⁸⁹ For evolving treatments of "patriarchy" and gender studies, see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives*; Elaine Forman Crane, *Witches, Wife-Beaters, and Whores: Common Law and Common Folk in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Bloch, *Gender and Morality*.

Tituba as Arawak, noting that the Atlantic slave economy included the enslavement of indigenous groups generally, and that portrayals of her as a voodoo practitioner leading the afflicted children astray are not historically founded. He cites the fact that documentation from the seventeenth century on attributes English acts of magic to her and relates the story of a white woman, Mary Sibley, ordering her to perform an act of counter-magic. He also notes that Reverend Parris likely used violence to force a confession out of her, and that the afflicted children may have accused Tituba because her vulnerability as an enslaved woman made it unlikely that anyone would come to her defense.⁸⁹⁰ By contrast, the tour guide on the “1692 Witchcraft Walk” in 2018 only mentioned Tituba once, to recount a story in which she taught the afflicted children a fortune-telling trick, although he did note that this was just a game and that Tituba was not the instigator of the trials.⁸⁹¹ As noted previously, however, documents from 1692 do not record instances of Tituba teaching fortune-telling to the afflicted girls, nor is there evidence that Abigail Williams and Betty Parris practiced such tricks, instigating the witch trials.⁸⁹² Others like the guide on the “Spellbound” tour continued to identify Tituba as a voodoo practitioner.⁸⁹³ Thus, across walking tours, the discussions of the colonial dynamics at work in 1692 are even more uneven than interpretation of sexism.

Like the historical walking tours, paranormal attractions tend to anchor their tales of supernatural horror in the social horror of 1692, emphasizing the victimization of marginalized groups and the capacity of the legal system for cruelty. However, ghost

⁸⁹⁰ “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁸⁹¹ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” August 2018.

⁸⁹² See Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 108.

⁸⁹³ “Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts,” August 2018.

tours narrate these injustices in a way that offers more emotional resolution or closure for visitors. Most historical tours inform visitors that most people who perpetrated the witch trials never repented for their actions and none suffered any direct consequences. Ghost stories usually offer retribution against those involved in witch trials by presenting a narrative imagining in which those who oversaw the Witch Trials face some sort of reprisal for their actions at the hands of their victims by supernatural means. In these stories, accused witches curse their killers to their own agonizing deaths, or Judge Hathorne's ghost looks down to see the defacement of his grave by generations who have condemned his actions. At the same time, because ghost tours contain issues of gender, colonialism, and violence within the realms of the supernatural and the past, emotional discomfort and any attendant immediacy to destabilize hierarchies and create more accountability is ameliorated and the subversive potential of these narratives is muted. Ghost walks' emphasis on abuses by elites points to a greater concern with generalized corruption as a contemporary threat to a just society than racism or misogyny. The framing of these abuses suggests an awareness of or discomfort with how gender and race are enmeshed with classed forms of privilege.

In her study of ghost tourism, Michele Hanks argues that "ghosts constitute a type of disembodied heritage. The Touristic quest for ghosts is marked more frequently by absences than presences, by incomplete and sometimes incoherent narratives, and by a sense of disquiet and unsettledness on the part of the tourists. This disquiet reflects tourists' engagement with their national past while also providing them with a rhetorical

and embodied means of critiquing popular representations of the past.”⁸⁹⁴ She adds, building on the work of Dean MacCannell, Edward Bruner, and David Lowenthal on authenticity, that ghost tourism treats the question of authenticity "playfully" and crosses lines between the authentic and inauthentic – the point is enjoying a story and thinking about the nature of belief more than it is about the strict reality of the story being told. At the same time, the goal of many ghost hunts is an authentic encounter with the paranormal: "Tourists desire authentic encounters with ghosts and, as a result, authentic encounters with the past."⁸⁹⁵ Thus, encountering a ghost associated with the Salem Witch Trials offers tourists an authentic encounter with 1692 unmediated by the role of experts, constituting a sort of vernacular knowledge of history that variously “challenges or reaffirms dominant notions of the...national past.”⁸⁹⁶ Armed with “new insights” into the past that are not necessarily included in, or consistent with, recorded history allows ghost tourists to emerge from their encounters as a sort of expert in history.⁸⁹⁷

María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Preen note that the subjectivities of a ghost, such as gender and race, matter greatly in supernatural encounters, particularly in fictions where:

spectrality is used as a conceptual metaphor to effect revisions of history and/or reimaginings of the future in order to expose and address the way certain subjectivities have been marginalized and disavowed in order to establish and

⁸⁹⁴ Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*, 15. See also Diane E. Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeannie Banks Thomas, *Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007).

⁸⁹⁵ Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*, 23-25.

⁸⁹⁶ Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*, 15.

⁸⁹⁷ Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*, 23.

uphold a particular norm, as well as the way such subjectivities can never be completely erased but insist on reappearing to trouble the norm.⁸⁹⁸

Further, these sorts of spectral subjectivities mirror the ways in which privileged categories of identity like masculinity and whiteness remain largely invisible.⁸⁹⁹ Avery Gordon argues that ghost stories afford an opportunity to recapture the histories and lived experiences of groups of marginalized subjectivities elided by white, male-dominated cultural discourses and academic fields.⁹⁰⁰ In Brian Norman's study of female ghosts in literature, he finds that these female spirits can constitute a demand for citizenship by marginalized groups, "speaking" through a ghostly figure to assert "active participation in a community that might prefer her absence, silence, or acquiescence" and "address an issue of injustice that their communities might prematurely consign to the past."⁹⁰¹ Robin Roberts notes that even when a particular ghost story renders a female spirit voiceless, this reflects efforts to suppress women's voices in life, and the presence of a ghostly woman can interrupt male-dominated notions of history and heritage. Critically, ghost narratives typically describe spirits acting against the "biases used to oppress them" through the assertion of their gender, racial, or cultural identities.⁹⁰²

⁸⁹⁸ María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Preen, "Spectral Subjectivities: Gender, Sexuality, Race/Introduction," in *The Spectralities Reader*, ed. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Preen (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), Kindle Edition.

⁸⁹⁹ del Pilar Blanco and Preen, *Spectralities Reader*, "Spectral Subjectivities: Gender, Sexuality, Race/Introduction," Kindle Edition.

⁹⁰⁰ See also Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁹⁰¹ Brian Norman, *Dead Women Talking: Figures of Injustice in American Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 1, 3.

⁹⁰² Robin Roberts, *Subversive Spirits: The Female Ghost in British and American Popular Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 3.

Scholars of ghosts and the Gothic often find that spirits who “trouble the norm” do so through deviant constructions of femininity, particularly racialized femininity. Jeannie Banks Thomas, for instance, examines a ghost typology she terms the “Deviant Femme,” a spirit who inverts the qualities of normative femininity through “rage, violence, mental illness, and eccentricity.”⁹⁰³ Feminist cultural critic Andi Zeisler argues that ghosts in modern film and folklore are typically the “terrifying manifestations of women who were scorned, abused, wronged, or otherwise have serious beef with the living people who were part of their death.”⁹⁰⁴ In death, female ghosts assume all of the “anger that makes living women sources of fear, but none of the societal restriction,” allowing them to “subvert the assumptions and traditions of women as dutiful wives and mothers, worshipful girlfriends, or obedient children by unleashing a lifetime’s worth of rage and retribution.”⁹⁰⁵ As argued below, however, relegating these qualities of “deviant” womanhood to the realm of the supernatural can mitigate work towards social critique.

Tiya Miles’ study of whether plantation house museums realize the critical potential of ghosts and paranormal tourism in their stories of hauntings by enslaved women is particularly important here. In *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*, Miles considers how plantation house museums and urban historic house museums utilize ghost tours to entertain and

⁹⁰³ Jeannie Banks Thomas, “Gender and Ghosts,” in Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas, *Haunting Experiences*, 82.

⁹⁰⁴ Andi Zeisler, “The Feminist Power of Female Ghosts,” Bitch Media, <https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/the-feminist-power-of-female-ghosts>

⁹⁰⁵ Zeisler, “The Feminist Power of Female Ghosts,” <https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/the-feminist-power-of-female-ghosts>

(ostensibly) inform tourists, and how these tours, while potentially subversive, more often serve to reify Old South racial myth making. Miles draws upon the theoretical framework of dark tourism, formulated by AV Seaton, John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, to show how sensationalizing the horrors of slavery nullifies any attempts at critique, thereby making slavery “fun” for tourists without fostering critical thinking about the white supremacist systems slavery engendered.⁹⁰⁶ Lennon and Foley argue that interest in “dark tourism,” namely tourism of sites associated with mass atrocity and trauma, is a function of post-modernism where media attention builds interest in sites associated with trauma, specifically traumas that provoke anxiety about modernity, leading to the packaging of these sites as commodities.⁹⁰⁷ Miles explores the extent to which this formulation could be applied to sites associated with slavery. For instance, sites and practices of dark tourism (such as the ghost tours she analyzes) center on the use of affect to create empathetic connection with past and present victims of injustices and promote memorialization and change. Given the ways in which racism and the historical experiences of slavery have been naturalized or softened in American culture, Miles considers whether dark touristic approaches might be useful in creating empathy in tourists that can lead them to think critically about white supremacy.⁹⁰⁸

Miles argues that ghost tours have tremendous potential to subvert white supremacist narratives of history that ultimately goes unfulfilled. Ghost tours offer a way

⁹⁰⁶ Miles, *Tales*. See also Lennon and Foley, *Dark Tourism*; Seaton, "Guided by the Dark," 234-244. For more on dark tourism, see Sion, *Death Tourism*; Sharpley and Stone, *The Darker Side of Travel*; Williams, *Memorial Museums*; Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*.

⁹⁰⁷ Lennon and Foley, *Dark Tourism*, 11-12.

⁹⁰⁸ Miles, *Tales*, 1-20.

to focus on human emotions and the lives of enslaved persons, challenging material and decorative arts-centered narratives of house museums that center and overtly valorize white supremacist narratives.⁹⁰⁹ She contends that these narratives can tell stories otherwise “suppressed, avoided, or euphemized in public life,” and represent “unsettling social memories.”⁹¹⁰ However, in practice, by expressing traumatic experiences of slavery as supernatural events, ghost tours allow visitors to “index disturbing historical happenings” but also “contain the threat of that knowledge by making it unbelievable.”⁹¹¹ Thus, engaging the circumstances that caused a slave to return as a spirit allows tourists to recognize the injustice of slavery, but “from a safe emotional distance” via stories that “diminish the harshness of slavery.”⁹¹² Ultimately, the subversive potential of ghost tourism is unrealized, and in practice such tours affirm white patriarchal dominance through coded language and misdirection. Miles notes that:

The white male slaveholder never really appears in the stories but remains innocent offstage...By sensationalizing the abuses of slavery while protecting white men from blame and by casting doubt on the capacities of white women in positions of authority...[they] popularize corrupt ideas about social relations from the past.⁹¹³

These stories act as a palliative to white anxiety about enslavement through euphemized narrative devices or playing up the seductive or mystical power of Black women as a threat to white society, mitigating the actual threat posed by white people to women of

⁹⁰⁹ And, depending on whether ghost tours go beyond the physical space of a particular museum or encompass several such properties, they also trouble strict brick-and-mortar approaches to house museum practice.

⁹¹⁰ Miles, *Tales*, 15.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹¹² Miles, *Tales*, 17.

⁹¹³ Miles, *Tales*, 79.

color. By portraying enslaved women as the agents of violence against white families, the violence inherent in slavery is elided and slaves unbound by the authority of white patriarchs are presented as disorderly and destructive. This suggests that the *collapse* of white patriarchal hegemony over unruly Black men and women, not the perpetration of coercive racial violence, is the true “horror of slavery.”⁹¹⁴ Thus, while ghost tours have the potential to be subversive because, in contrast to most other interpretive forms at plantation house museums, such programs center the enslaved status of their subjects, they most often wind up documenting the continued denial of racist power structures at work in museum spaces instead of challenging the discursive structures that facilitate the oppression of Black Americans.

Paranormal tours in Salem suffer from the same problems identified by Miles and other feminist scholars of haunted tourism and the Gothic in that they “index” the suffering of victims of the Witch Trials but contain knowledge of misogynistic and colonial violence.⁹¹⁵ This tendency is particularly evident in paranormal tourism’s treatment of Tituba. Many ghost tours minimize Tituba’s presence in their interpretation of the witch trials, sometimes eliding her entirely or correcting issues of her race and forced confession before moving on. However, other tours and the marketing of supernatural attractions perpetuate the stereotype of Tituba, the voodoo practitioner, marking her out as the lone figure with access to supernatural power in 1692. The continuance of Tituba’s construction as a figure of fear points to a complacency with

⁹¹⁴ Miles, *Tales*, 80-114.

⁹¹⁵ Miles, *Tales*, 15.

racialized power structures that allows them to continue. There appears to be a desire for comfort from some forms of privilege in which white people can pay lip service to colonial inequalities in treatments of Tituba while also capitalizing on racist stereotypes and experiencing the thrill of racial horror. Similarly, sensationalized accounts of seventeenth-century treatments of women allow tourists and guides to feel good for criticizing historical misogyny while also capitalizing on classic horror tropes like killing hyper-sexualized women. For instance, guides of the “Spellbound” and “Hocus Pocus” tours linger on descriptions of Bridget Bishop’s sexuality, describing her supposed flirtatiousness and provocative styles of dress before rhetorically killing her in the tour script.⁹¹⁶ The supernatural-historical framing suggests that the misogyny and racism of these narratives was confined to the past. This, combined with widespread failures to engage with systemic inequality and reasons for Tituba’s misrepresentation point towards a twenty-first century re-articulation of white patriarchy. Racist and sexist tropes get embedded in narratives that allow white visitors to enjoy them in a way that also allows them without viewing themselves as sexist, racist, or generally benefitting from forms of social privilege.

Together, the historical and paranormal walking tours in Salem raise problems with the “politics of sympathy,” a notion rooted in eighteenth-century liberalism and Enlightenment discourse, particularly Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith argued that sympathy, or an interest in the welfare of others, would serve as an equalizer

⁹¹⁶ “Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts,” August 2018; “Hocus Pocus,” September 2016; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 28.

or an alternate “invisible hand” that would ameliorate the worst aspects of free-market economics.⁹¹⁷ By the nineteenth century, however, sentimentalism increasingly encouraged a sense of investment through a more affective rhetoric of pain and suffering. However, as Marianne Noble describes in her assessment of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, employing sympathy as a tool for engendering antislavery sentiments amongst white people involved positioning African Americans as victims rather than equals. Further, Stowe’s descriptions of enslavement objectified Black bodies and Black suffering, hindering efforts to encourage white audiences to recognize the humanity of enslaved persons.⁹¹⁸ The politics of sympathy at work in Salem operate in this same objectifying way, crafting spectacular narratives of suffering and the supernatural that position women, particularly Tituba, as objects of sympathy through descriptions of their victimization by colonial society in general and the Salem Witch Trials in particular. The feminist potential of “the witch” and witch history is contained by constructing women, particularly women of color, as dependent and subordinate as objects of sympathy; women who exhibit rage and aggression in these tours do so as objects of fright, contained within the realm of the supernatural.

White Women

The historical walking tours push back against the outright vilification of the afflicted girls by Arthur Miller and the edutainment attractions, albeit with varying

⁹¹⁷ See Tim Clark, “Becoming Everyone: The Politics of Sympathy in Deleuze and Rorty,” *Radical Philosophy* 147 (2008), 33-44.

⁹¹⁸ Marianne Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 124-146.

degrees of success. Typically, guides emphasize the failings of adult men in prosecuting the witch trials as a means of furthering their own social, political, and economic capital by using their position as adult men at the head of Massachusetts' legal, religious, and social strata to pressure the children into compliance with the hysteria.⁹¹⁹ The "Bewitched After Dark" tours and a guide on a 2016 "1692 Witchcraft Walk" tour, for instance, directly reference *The Crucible's* constructions of the afflicted girls as sexualized teenagers out for revenge against spurned lovers, pointing out that the bewitched children were, in fact, children. The "Bewitched After Dark" tour then emphasizes the familial, financial, and classed networks of the magistrates, ministers, and lead accusers like Thomas Putnam. The "1692 Witchcraft Walk" guide centered her narrative on the witch trials as a symptom of an entire colony in acute crisis from fears of warfare, the loss of its charter, social and economic transformations, environmental threats like drought, and the anxieties that these calamities provoked in Puritans constantly searching for signs of their ultimate salvation or damnation.⁹²⁰ By de-centering the role of the bewitched children and placing so much interpretive weight on structural factors and the actions of adults, the guides construct the witch trials as a function of social structures rather than the malice and caprice of individual teenagers.

Despite emphasizing the structural factors that drove the witch trials, however, the guides often struggle with how to account for the initial claims of bewitchment and the

⁹¹⁹ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹²⁰ "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

children's personalities or possible satisfaction they got from their roles in the trials. Some place more weight on the idea that the children genuinely suffered from some sort of ailment and believed themselves bewitched. Tourists on the "Stroll" tour, for instance, learn that initial illnesses of Betty Parris and Abigail Williams were likely real, and that the community investment in their cases combined with the intense religious and social pressures of being a young girl in Puritan New England likely protracted their fits and led other local children to exhibit similar symptoms. Due to the fervency with which colonial New Englanders believed in witchcraft, once an initial diagnosis of witchcraft had been made, others, including adult men and women, came to believe themselves victims of witchcraft also.⁹²¹ Similarly, the guide for a 2016 "1692 Witchcraft Walk" tour explained that Puritans accepted the Devil and witchcraft as absolute realities, which in the context of seventeenth-century crises and adults' suggestions, might have driven the children to exhibit fits.⁹²² Other guides fall back on the idea that the girls faked the whole hysteria for their own personal motives, which has been the dominant touristic mode of interpreting the Salem Witch Trials since the 1880s, and offers tourists a clear, easily comprehensible reason for why the witch crisis occurred.⁹²³ The guide on a 2018 iteration of the "1692 Witchcraft Walk," however, informed tourists that the girls absolutely faked their symptoms to avoid getting into trouble for fortunetelling with Tituba, and that they feared confessing to their lie because doing so would lead to beatings and social humiliation. The "Bewitched" tours, meanwhile, argued that the oldest of the girls, a

⁹²¹ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018.

⁹²² "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹²³ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018. Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

seventeen-year-old, likely faked her own afflictions for attention and a sense of power otherwise denied to her by colonial society, and used her influence over younger, really suffering children to keep them participating in the court proceedings. The guide follows Mary Beth Norton in arguing that some of the girls' afflictions might have been episodes of post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from witnessing horrific violence in the wars in Maine; others might have experienced genuine bouts of illness and psychological distress out of psychological stress and belief in the supernatural.⁹²⁴ Once adults realized that they could make a profit off of these trials, they became invested in escalating the scale of the trials and the girls realized that if they ceased cooperating they could become victims of the witch trials as well.⁹²⁵ In spite of the variation in constructions of the children's personalities, the guides' overall tone towards them is sympathetic, emphasizing the adults' roles in pushing for the witch trials, presiding over the courts, and entering accusations against their neighbors as well as the physical, social, and religious pressures that might have driven the children to believe in witchcraft or at least feel forced to comply with the witchcraft proceedings. Thus, the girls retain a bit of individual agency and variable individual motivations including trying to overcome limitations placed on them due to their age and gender, but found themselves still constricted by the goals and expectations of patriarchs.

The walking tours offer more direct engagement with misogyny as a factor that might have shaped girls' participation in witch trials. They also frame this sexism as a

⁹²⁴ See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

⁹²⁵ "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

harmful, destabilizing force in colonial society, unlike the edutainment sites, which tend to frame the afflicted girls as frightening examples of the chaos caused by uncontrolled adolescents. The basic narrative in both genres is similar; both explain that Puritan girls held little social value, had few opportunities for recreation, received limited education, and instead lived lives around learning a series of laborious domestic chores in preparation for marriage. The walking tours frame this social devaluation as the underlying issue in the initial afflictions. The girls' secondary status made them particularly vulnerable to physical violence for failing to cooperate with adults' claims of bewitchment, might have led some of them to seize the opportunity to exert influence in their communities by performing their fits in court, or contributed to psychological pressure that contributed to physical symptoms.⁹²⁶ This explanation seems to resonate with visitors, and indeed on four of these tours, women in the group brought up misogyny as a central facet of colonial life on their own.⁹²⁷ The coexistence of the walking tour and edutainment narratives of sexism and girlhood, and the seeming validity that both seem to find with visitors, points towards a fraught relationship with femininity and misogyny in American culture. On the one hand, tourists seem to rarely challenge the misogynistic narratives in witchcraft tourism and popular culture. At the same time, many tour guides do seek to undermine these narratives and directly condemn the misogyny underpinning witchcraft cases. When called out, most tourists seem eager to condemn the classification

⁹²⁶ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹²⁷ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

of women as “second-class citizens” in colonial society.⁹²⁸ When viewed at a remove and at as obvious an extreme as witchcraft persecutions, visitors recognize and condemn the maltreatment of women. The guides and tourists discuss colonial misogyny seriously in solemn tones.⁹²⁹ At the same time, however, the popularity of the edutainment sites indicates that many have difficulty recognizing the veins of misogyny running through contemporary society let alone critiquing continuities in gender inequity, or do not want to deal with it recreationally, despite vacationing at a site involving mass death in which gender played a significant role. Visitors face little pressure to think actively about progressivism or the continued need for gender-based advocacy in the present. As noted by professionals across the National Park Service, Essex Heritage, the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, and the Witch Museum, many guests come to the museum believing that a handful of spiteful teenagers caused the entire witch crisis, and persist in this characterization of the trials even when presented with alternate information.⁹³⁰ Indeed, across tours taken in 2016 and 2018, no visitors questioned tropes such as the afflicted girls as schemers or the hypersexualization of Bridget Bishop. Most often, tourists responded with nods of agreement and comments about how “girls that age are terrible,” or rounds of laughter a one tour guide’s joke that Bishop was known as a “gossip, who

⁹²⁸ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” August 2018

⁹²⁹ “The Salem Morning Stroll,” August 2018; “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018; “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹³⁰ Informational Interview, Essex Heritage, Salem, Massachusetts, August 24, 2018. Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, September 2016 and August 2018; Informational Interview, Salem Witch Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, August 7, 2018.

could imagine that, ladies!”⁹³¹ This bifurcation between historical misogyny and contemporary attitudes towards women promotes a complacency with modern gender relations; because sexism now appears less overtly than in literal witch hunts, its existence may be denied or its harms minimized.

This historicizing of misogyny persists in constructions of female victims of the witch trials, although walking tours typically grant these women much more individuality and agency in their narratives than the edutainment sites, showing them as courageous in the face of unjust accusations shaded by misogyny. The guide of the “Bewitched” tours, for instance, describes how Alice Parker had rented land from the Englishes and tried to intervene against the confiscation of his property upon his arrest only to be arrested and executed herself.⁹³² Martha Corey opposed the trials on principal and condemned the proceedings as corrupt, only to be denounced herself. When constables came to arrest her, she refused to meet them at the door, denied the charges against her, and refused to cooperate with the legal proceedings.⁹³³ Guides also use the transcript quotes carved into the 1992 memorial to speak to how the accused women defended themselves in court and challenged the legitimacy of the proceedings against them. The tours also portray the accused women as active members of their communities as land owners, businesswomen, neighbors, and church members. In contrast to sites like the Witch Museum where suspicions seemingly just happen to fall upon women like Rebecca Nurse, these guides

⁹³¹ The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018; "Black Cat Tour," September 2016; "Haunted Footsteps," Salem, Massachusetts, August 2018

⁹³² "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹³³ "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

describe how women like Nurse, Martha Carrier, or Sarah Wilde got into conflict with their neighbors in defense of their property rights, or how Elizabeth Howe garnered resentment within her community for getting angry when denied membership in church.⁹³⁴ The Bewitched tour also reframes one of the staple narratives about Rebecca Nurse – the one in which her benign innocence inspires the men around her to rally to her defense with a petition for her release – in a way that makes her more active instead of a passive figure around whom others act and show their own goodness. In this retelling, she had been a leader in her church and her community for decades, and as a result of the reputation she had built, others felt comfortable signing a petition in her favor, feeling that the way she had lived her life made it apparent she was not a witch.⁹³⁵ In this way, the accused women appear more fully as individuals with historical specificity who lived full lives before the Salem Witch Trials and navigated the 1692 persecution according to their personalities and prior lived experiences.

In describing how these women accrued suspicions of witchcraft, guides describe them as outsiders for reasons clearly related to their gender and colonial misogyny but stop short of directly engaging structural sexism itself. As noted above, guides relate that colonial society did not value women in relation to the afflicted girls, how they had limited access to education, and social expectations that located them in a domestic context. In describing the victims, guides note that early accusations especially tended to target the most socially vulnerable women. Guides consistently refer to Bridget Bishop's

⁹³⁴ “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018; “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹³⁵ “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

reputation for quarrelling with her husbands, dressing ostentatiously, drinking, behaving promiscuously, or the fact that Sarah Osborne freed and married a younger indentured servant. Bishop, Osborne, Martin, and others often appear as “outspoken” or “quarrelsome” in interpretation.⁹³⁶ Visitors must infer for themselves that this made these women suspect because their behavior was not normatively womanly. Similarly, the “Hocus Pocus” tour notes that Sarah Good, a “misfit” due to her poverty and her smoking habit, could be convicted without much protest but does not address why her itinerant status and smoking would have been tied to her aberrative performance of femininity and that that nonconformity contributed to suspicions against her.⁹³⁷ Guides’ nonconfrontational approach to misogyny could go further to tie in with the “never again” messaging of the tourist industry, reinforced by most of the walking tours. The “Hocus Pocus” tour, for instance, ends with a statement that remembering 1692 should prompt some reflection about the dangers of “ignorance,” while the “Bewitched in Salem” guide positions the witch trials as a warning for the importance of collective action in the face of scapegoating, most recently seen in the United States in post-9/11 Islamophobia.⁹³⁸ If guides wish to interpret the Salem Witch Trials in ways that will prevent similar violence in the future, it seems that a good way to do so would be by directly engaging with how gender, particularly deviance from gender norms, makes women and other non-conforming identities especially vulnerable to social ostracism, economic disadvantages, and violence.

⁹³⁶ “The Salem Morning Stroll,” August 2018; “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018; “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹³⁷ “Hocus Pocus,” September 2016.

⁹³⁸ “Hocus Pocus,” September 2016; “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

Guides frame the “difficult” elements of these women’s personalities in an admirable light, positioning them as empowering figures for women. Guides on the “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” “Bewitched After Dark,” and “Stroll” historical tours praise women like Bridget Bishop or Susannah Martin for being outspoken and defying constricting colonial gender norms through behaviors like extra-marital sex, drinking and smoking openly, or controlling property.⁹³⁹ The “Bewitched After Dark” tour, for instance, provides brief information about each of the executed witches, and the guide generally described how each individual attracted suspicions of witchcraft for acting in socially deviant ways. For instance, he described how Bridget Bishop had a reputation for being loud, or that Elizabeth Howe and Sarah Good had exhibited outbursts of anger. The guides description of these qualities was matter of fact, illustrations of how “badly” Puritan society treated women.⁹⁴⁰ Similarly, the 2018 guide of the “1692 Witchcraft Walk” informed visitors that women in colonial society were “second-class citizens,” but that some women “fought back,” citing the case of Lydia Wardwell, a Quaker woman who went to Church naked as a form of protest, although he could not remember what for. How exactly this constituted “fighting back” against misogyny was not quite explicated, functioning more as an example of de-politicized “girl power” than feminism.⁹⁴¹ Visitors to the Hocus Pocus tour hear a very jovial description of Bridget

⁹³⁹ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁴⁰ "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁴¹ "1692 Witchcraft Walk," August 2018. It seems Lydia Perkins Wardwell had become a Quaker and withdrawn from church. When ordered to appear, she did so naked to flout the spirit if not the letter of the law. She was taken up to Salem’s courthouse and sentenced to a public whipping. Gordon Wood, “Lydia Wardwell on her presentment for coming naked into Newbury meeting house,” Historic Ipswich,

Bishop as fun and benignly empowering for wearing a red bodice, gossiping, drinking, and not paying her bills.⁹⁴² However, these women are described as being outspoken, challenging, and sexual mostly in the context of an obvious legal catastrophe and an ill-defined oppressive Puritan society; they do not challenge men or patriarchy or systemic misogyny in any way. Thus, misogyny and social limitations on women's ability to assert themselves in public appear as a past problem rather than a point of continuity between past and present.

Further, the "empowerment" framing is so ill-defined and non-confrontational that the witch – both as an archetype and historical category – gets stripped of its feminist connotations.⁹⁴³ Because historical and pop cultural constructions of "the witch" are so defined by sexism and challenges thereof, walking tours could be perfectly positioned to unpack historical constructions of gender and resistance to such norms, connect them to systemic issues of inequality, and draw connections between the past and present by pointing to continuities in gender-based oppression and the role the witch plays in challenging sexist views of femininity. Such a direct confrontation might alienate visitors, particularly men, who view feminism as threatening to their own positions of privilege or through the lens of other stereotypes about the feminist movement. Instead, walking tours offer up a brand of toothless "girl-power" female empowerment. In this

<https://historicipswich.org/2017/10/22/lydia-wardwell-on-her-presentment-for-coming-naked-into-newbury-meeting-house/>

⁹⁴² "Hocus Pocus," September 2016.

⁹⁴³ For feminist treatments of witchcraft in second wave feminism, see Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* and Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses*. For examples the use of witches in contemporary feminism, see Kristen J. Sollee, *Witches, Sluts, and Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2017) and Lindy West, *The Witches Are Coming* (New York: Hachette Books, 2019).

formulation, women express their power through expressions of sexuality and consumerism rather than by demanding real political and economic transformations. This discourse “encourages girls and women to identify as both traditionally feminine objects” as well as “powerful” individuals who can, thanks to “a neoliberal language of choice” decide to “play” with that power by “taking it on and off at will.”⁹⁴⁴ In this way, resistance to gender inequality appears to fall on individual women and women’s choices rather than men to dismantle systems they perpetuate and benefit from.

Walking tours extend this quasi-feminist reclaiming only to white women. As will be discussed below, guides do attempt to push back against racism in tourist and literary portrayals of Tituba and position her as another victim of 1692, but framing her as not actively being a malicious instigator of a witch frenzy is not the same as portraying her in a positive or empowering way. A woman of color’s anger and resistance towards intertwined systems of misogyny and racism might be read as particularly threatening to overwhelmingly white audiences, privileging their emotional comfort over a necessary indictment of such inequalities.⁹⁴⁵ Witchcraft tourism’s focus on white women’s issues and lack of intersectional analysis reifies white feminism at the expense of actual social progressivism.

⁹⁴⁴ Emilie Zaslow, *Feminism, Inc.: Coming of Age in Girl Power Media Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3. See also Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018) and Jessalyn Keller and Maureen E. Ryan, eds., *Emergent Feminisms: Complicating a Postfeminist Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

⁹⁴⁵ See Brittney C. Cooper, *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2018); Robin Diangelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

While walking tour guides do attempt to condemn seventeenth-century sexism, their portrayal of colonial misogyny is extremely one-note and lacking in nuance. Women appear as completely oppressed and miserable, trapped within the home and Puritan social expectations.⁹⁴⁶ The seventeenth century was certainly misogynistic, but in a more complicated way – involving gendered behavioral expectations such as discomfort with “aggressive” women and the exertion of informal social controls such as gossip to curtail illicit behaviors. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, however, questions assumptions that before the advent of modernity, women were entirely defined by “disadvantage and subjugation.” She argues that, while people did not question male superiority or the secondary status of women, the duties of men and women were seen as reciprocal, not unidirectional, and that “contradictory possibilities were built into a system which meshed law with sentiment, property with procreation, and gender specialization with communal obligation.”⁹⁴⁷ According to Ulrich, women were subject to patriarchal authority under legal principles of coverture and religious exhortations to submit to God and their husbands. However, in practice, women occupied a series of “discrete” roles (such as “housewife,” “consort,” “mother,” “deputy husband,” “mistress,” “neighbor,” or “heroine”) that allowed for female agency and precluded any “completeness” in patriarchal control. For example, seventeenth century husbands were “supreme in external affairs” on the whole, but as “deputy husbands” women could “appropriately stand in” for their husbands and make economic decisions on behalf of the

⁹⁴⁶ “The Salem Morning Stroll,” August 2018; “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018; “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁴⁷ See Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives*.

household.⁹⁴⁸ Although women were expected to act in ways that served the good of their households and were certainly expected to be subordinate to their husbands, they were nonetheless active and empowered to exercise agency on its behalf.

Similarly, Richard Godbeer argues that in early seventeenth-century New England, while there was a gap between popular and official ideologies of normative sexual behavior, there was also emphasis on community life, close-knit families, and church attendance that served to police the boundaries of sexual behavior. And indeed, as Godbeer and other scholars of early America have shown, New Englanders engaged in a wide variety of illicit sexual and gendered behaviors.⁹⁴⁹ Those who transgressed would find themselves the subject of community gossip or brought before the church for correction. Godbeer also argues that the Puritans sought to either ignore or correct transgressive behavior in order to maintain communal identity and the fabric of community life.⁹⁵⁰ Tour guides could draw upon this body of scholarship to create a more complicated worldview for New Englanders as part of historical context for the 1692 trials, by discussing the tense, complex interconnections between religion, gender, sexuality, and economics at work in early Massachusetts, thereby demonstrating how testing the boundaries of normative behavior could accumulate into disreputability and become dangerous in period of social unrest.

⁹⁴⁸ Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 35-50.

⁹⁴⁹ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Thomas Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007); Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*.

⁹⁵⁰ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, 19-118.

Tour guides' flattening of women's experiences locates misogyny as a past system of organizing gender relations, which seems a missed interpretive opportunity given the ways in which witchcraft accusations offer a lens for analyzing how gendered social coding contributes to larger social consequences. Reducing historical misogyny to its unnuanced extremes also naturalizes patriarchy in a roundabout way because it fails to address it as a system that also shapes male actions and obscures that masculinity is a construct meant to uphold patriarchal systems just as femininity is. For instance, guides could point to abusive behavior by Giles Corey and George Burroughs as failures in masculine performance that might have led to their eventual identification as witches. Because misogyny appears as an abstract force oppressing women only, with the men who upheld patriarchal norms largely absent from the narrative, sexism appears as a woman's issue not directly tied to men's actions or men's interests. Even in the interpretation and body language of the guides when they discuss sexism and women's roles in colonial society, they position themselves to speak directly to female members of the audience, not the men who benefit most from gendered systems of power while also facing the least pressure to dismantle the inequalities they benefit from.

It seems that historical walking tours engaging Salem witchcraft are particularly well-poised to make the workings of gender as a construct and a system of power relations visible to tour-goers. For instance, most historical tour guides offer some contextual framing for the witch trials, outlining the religion, politics, and economics of colonial New England and explaining how they created social stresses that led to the

witchcraft crisis.⁹⁵¹ Guides could incorporate gender into this framework, for instance by explaining how the religious, folk, and legal cultures of the seventeenth-century promulgated misogynistic understandings of women and witches, and how these factors along with disproportionately poor access to economic, social, and legal influence made women more likely to be accused of witchcraft.⁹⁵² With reference to particular witchcraft cases such as Giles Corey or Bridget Bishop's, guides could illustrate both how individuals tested the boundaries of colonial gender norms and the ways in which the men and women around them enforced those boundaries as the work of a community, culminating in accusations of witchcraft in a moment of crisis in 1692.

Guides might do something similar with regard to de-naturalizing race as a category of power and oppression in their interpretation of Tituba. Rather than merely correcting Tituba's ethnic identity and stating that her enslaved status rendered her more vulnerable to witchcraft charges, as in the example from the "Bewitched After Dark" tour described above, guides could explicate more specifically Puritans' views of indigenous persons, particularly women. By explaining how early modern Anglo-Americans conceptualized colonial difference and accorded in-group/outgroup status and interpreting why media and tourist narratives have constructed Tituba as Black instead of indigenous as white people conceptualized "race" in its modern sense, guides could also destabilize race as a means of organizing power. In this way, tour guides could use the alterity of the past to denaturalize patriarchy, misogyny, and gender categories and render

⁹⁵¹ For Salem Witchcraft as a social crisis, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*.

⁹⁵² For feminism, gender, and witchcraft in Salem, see Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* and Reis, *Damned Women*.

them visible as something conceptualized, contested, and maintained through the interactions of individuals and systemic factors. By emphasizing the constructed-ness of gender, patriarchy, and ethnicity in the past, guides might afford visitors a deeper understanding of colonial New England and the dynamics of a witch hunt, but also perhaps destabilize notions of gender and power in the present.

Threatening women's emotions like anger or a desire for vengeance tend to get shifted into a paranormal context. For instance, the Merchant House Hotel, which stands on the site of George Corwin's home, markets itself as being haunted by an unidentified female spirit believed to be a victim of the late sheriff, come to take her revenge on him and vent her rage on unsuspecting visitors to the hotel. The hotel serves as a stop on ghost tours as well, with each guide recounting supposed encounters with this ghostly victim, oftentimes referring to or passing around copies of photographs of her as evidence of her existence.⁹⁵³ Tour groups might also learn about the demise of Judge Nicholas Noyes. According to a local legend popularized by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The House of the Seven Gables* and local tour guides, Sarah Good cursed Noyes from the gallows, proclaiming her innocence and vowing that "God would give him blood to drink" if he killed her. Noyes eventually died of an aneurism or hemorrhage that caused him to choke to death on his own blood.⁹⁵⁴ This may be because a spirit functions as "a figure of unruliness" and a disturbance of the present by the past reflect a "failure to internalize a

⁹⁵³ "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018; "Hocus Pocus," September 2016.

⁹⁵⁴ "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 32-33.

past event.”⁹⁵⁵ Through the supernatural, guides offer tourists a bit of emotional resolution in which women could take direct revenge against the men who caused their deaths, and their anger, agency, and retribution are validated as righteous. At the same time, however, the spectrality of women’s rage and vengeance contains them as vanished. As Tiya Miles notes, “ghost stories are taken lightly, in jest, and are viewed as primitive or playful. Revelations of historical import embedded in ghost stories are therefore dismissed as unreal.”⁹⁵⁶ Further, as noted by del Pilar Blanco and Peeren in their introduction to the *Spectralities Reader*, ghosts often function as intrusions by the past or as a form of historical narrative.⁹⁵⁷ Thus, the vengeful witch haunting the Merchant House Hotel figures issues of misogyny, violence, and retaliation against oppressive forces as both historical and unserious; they have no true place in the present or in the real.

However, supernatural tourism in particular plays up anxieties about uncontrolled feminine feeling in order to maximize an atmosphere of fun horror by hyper-sexualizing Bridget Bishop. The “Spellbound” tour, for instance, describes Bishop as “sexy,” popular with men but not their jealous wives, and known for flirting with married men, while the “Hocus Pocus” tour singles out her “red bodice” and tendency to wear what she wanted as evidence of her supposed promiscuity.⁹⁵⁸ As noted even on other walking tours, these characterizations of Bishop’s sexuality seem to be invented wholesale or conflated with

⁹⁵⁵ del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader*,” Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities,” Kindle Edition.

⁹⁵⁶ Miles, *Tales*, 15.

⁹⁵⁷ del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader*,” Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities,” Kindle Edition.

⁹⁵⁸ “Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts,” August 2018; “Hocus Pocus,” September 2016.

other women with similar names from Essex County. Rather than alluring, Bishop had a reputation scholar Emerson Baker describes as “elderly, poor, quarrelsome, and suspicious...everyone’s idea of a witch.”⁹⁵⁹ The overt sexualization of Bishop then points to a continued ambivalence towards women’s bodily autonomy, viewing it as simultaneously fun but also as suspect, unruly, and inviting trouble. The supernatural framing of these stories seems to echo horror tropes in which the overtly sexual female character is among the first to die, seemingly as punishment for her sexual agency, as indeed Bridget Bishop was the first person executed in 1692.⁹⁶⁰ By not problematizing the ways in which Bishop’s supposed sexuality made her socially vulnerable, these tours naturalize assumptions that women’s sexual behavior is inviting backlash or outright punishment. By interpreting how a woman who might have had a reputation for unruly sexuality that contributed to her social ostracism by playing up said sexuality in a sensational way, these guides reinforce the same stigmatizing of female sexuality that supposedly made Bishop vulnerable to retaliation and violence from her neighbors during the witch trials.

Centering revenge against the men who led the witch trials in supernatural stories about the witch trials seems to serve two principal purposes. First, the supernatural tours provide emotional closure for the lack of accountability for these elite men in 1692. Historic walking tours generally note that the men who perpetrated the trials faced no social or legal consequences for their actions, and indeed most never even repented for

⁹⁵⁹ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016. See also Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 28.

⁹⁶⁰ For discussions of gender and horror films, see Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* and Grant, *The Dread of Difference*.

them personally.⁹⁶¹ On the ghost tours, however, victims of the trials are imagined to be able to take direct action against their killers by cursing them.⁹⁶² The implication is that Corwin or Judge Noyes got what they deserved by dying early, frightening deaths, but contain these acts of retribution within the imaginary. Second, placing women's acts of anger and violence within a paranormal context frames them as a fun thrill, as being less real or less valid because they exist within the realm of the supernatural. These emotions are contained within the fantastical in a way that divorces them from contemporary gendered power dynamics that might make people, particularly men, uncomfortable. Embodying these characteristics in a ghost also inhibits identification with the victims, and by extension limits the ability of the audience to take action around the core issues of injustice in the narrative. Ghosts also exist outside the control of men and human society, acting as a metaphor for fears of uncontrolled women, and consistently locating women's anger, sexuality, and autonomy in a frightening context implicitly upholds patriarchy as normal, orderly, and necessary. However, ghosts also operate as a "metaphor for encounters with disturbing forms otherness" and as metaphors for history, and as Tiya Miles notes, ghost tourist companies especially produce ghosts as a form of historical narrative in ways that are palatable and commercially appealing to visitors.⁹⁶³ Further, while ghost stories may have dark undertones – such as slavery and racialized, gendered violence – few visitors will likely look for the complexities underlying narratives

⁹⁶¹ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁶² "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018; "Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts," August 2018; "Hocus Pocus," September 2016.

⁹⁶³ Miles, *Tales*, 1-47, 115-132.

packaged as an evening's light entertainment.⁹⁶⁴ Thus, via paranormal tours, Salem's specters produce a historical imaginary in which witches get revenge upon the specific men like Sheriff George Corwin for the wrongs done to them, but depoliticizes such vengeance and strips it of more troubling connections to lingering issues of gendered violence and misogyny in the present. Essentially, ghost tourism allows guides and tourists alike to invent women's anger and resentment and banish it simultaneously.

Tituba

In general, walking tours tend to frame Tituba as another victim of the Salem Witch Trials whose status as an enslaved woman made her particularly vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft. Typically, guides inform their audiences that Tituba was not Black, and that she most likely came from an Arawak Tribe in the Caribbean. Once the afflicted children began falling into fits, they named the most vulnerable people in their community – Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborn – because their positions as social outsiders meant that few would challenge their accusations. Tituba did confess to witchcraft, but only after being beaten and forced to confess by Samuel Parris. In this way, Tituba was innocent not only of witchcraft but of subsequent scapegoating for bedeviling the afflicted children and starting the witch trials deliberately.⁹⁶⁵

However, few guides devote much attention to deconstructing misrepresentations of Tituba's role in the witch trials beyond correcting the issue of her race and stating that

⁹⁶⁴ Miles, *Tales*, 42.

⁹⁶⁵ "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018; "Black Cat," September 2016; "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018.

she confessed under force. A guide on a 2016 version of the “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” for instance, included that nobody practiced witchcraft or voodoo in her opening statement on the innocence of Salem’s accused witches, and later noted that such modern depictions of Tituba resulted from nineteenth-century portrayals of her as a Black mistress of voodoo and the dark arts. This tour also allowed Tituba to retain some agency in her navigation of the witch trials, noting that as an enslaved woman she may have had personal motives for eventually providing testimony as she did and entering accusations against others.⁹⁶⁶ Critically, this tour afforded one of the few instances in Salem tourism that allowed Tituba to suffer from the pressures of colonialism, gender, and enslavement while also exercising some agency within these systems and potentially exercising strategy and anger while still remaining a figure of sympathy and identification for the audience. The “Bewitched” tours also point out that all of the acts of magic attributed to Tituba originated in European traditions.⁹⁶⁷

Only one other tour, the “Salem Stroll,” offered a counter-narrative to racist portrayals of Tituba and the nature of the witchcraft accusations against her. Here, the guide emphasizes that not only did Tituba not practice voodoo, but that there are no historical accounts of her teaching the afflicted children tricks or fortune telling. The only magical act she seems to have committed was baking a witch cake, a form of counter-magic intended to discover the identity of the witch who tormented the afflicted children.⁹⁶⁸ Critically, this guide is conversant in witchcraft scholarship, and he locates

⁹⁶⁶ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016.

⁹⁶⁷ “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁶⁸ “The Salem Morning Stroll,” August 2018.

this kind of counter-magic firmly within Anglo-American tradition, describing its prevalence in English cultural practices and understandings of the supernatural. He also emphasizes that a white woman, Mary Sibley, actually instructed Tituba and John Indian to prepare the cake. She, a white Englishwoman, suffered chastisement and humiliation in front of her congregation; Tituba and John Indian suffered beatings and coercion to confess to witchcraft themselves. Because Puritans accepted witches and the Devil as absolute realities, adults believed Tituba's forced confession, they spread the scale of the witch trials.⁹⁶⁹ This kind of interpretation, stating Tituba's innocence explicitly, correcting misrepresentations of her, and offering historical evidence and a more accurate narrative for visitors to engage with and measure against portrayals of her elsewhere in Salem, seems to offer the best model for advancing more critical interpretations of 1692.

More commonly, however, stereotypes of Tituba as the instigator of the trials and a fortune-teller entertaining the white girls under her care with the supernatural creep back into interpretations of Tituba, despite general assertions that she was also a victim. Some tour guides still claim that Tituba taught the girls fortune-telling tricks to determine their future marriages, although such acts were not sinister and likely stemmed from a need to keep the children entertained while she worked.⁹⁷⁰ Other tour guides continue to frame Tituba as the starting point of the witch trials more explicitly. One guide, for instance, claimed that Tituba started the witch trials "by accident" and that she was "the only real cause" of the witch trials, while another noted that the trials "began" with her.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁹ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018.

⁹⁷⁰ "1692 Witchcraft Walk," August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁷¹ "Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts," August 2018; "Black Cat," September 2016.

This kind of framing undermines other assertions, often made by the same tour guides, that Tituba should not be blamed for the witch trials, particularly if tourists have spent the rest of their day hearing stories at the edutainment sites that scapegoat her.

Taken together, the various portrayals of Tituba as another innocent victim of the witch trials, who did not practice voodoo but maybe taught fortunetelling, or who did not know magic at all, whose enslaved status made her particularly vulnerable to scapegoating but also sort of started the witch trials, continues to mark Tituba as an ambivalent figure of racial anxiety. In cases where guides highlight Tituba's racial identification but do not contextualize the nature of Puritan magical beliefs and the actual magical acts recorded in seventeenth-century documentation, Tituba remains an outsider with an ambiguous identity and role in the witch trials, and thus could be consumed by tourists as a figure of suspicion and potential threat. She also appears as peculiarly culpable for her confession, or at least held to a different standard of historical evidence and moral evaluation, than white New Englanders accused of witchcraft. In these cases, the guides exculpate those who confessed with a blanket statement about how they did so to save their own lives. Tituba, by contrast, can be forgiven for her confession because of torture, not just because she was an enslaved woman in immediate danger from the legal system and the man who enslaved her. This points to a presumption of white innocence and guilt for people of color.

While acknowledging the ways in which her positionality as an enslaved woman of color made her particularly susceptible to witchcraft accusations in 1692, tours almost never extend this understanding to interpreting why Tituba has been scapegoated for

starting the witch trials for generations since. As noted above, walking tours usually correct Tituba's racial misidentification as if that is the most important issue with her interpretation in Salem and rarely engage with why tourist attractions depict her as Black and single her out as a supernatural threat. Only one guide on a 2016 "1692 Witchcraft Walk" engaged with this issue, noting that nobody should be surprised that nineteenth-century white Christians began a tradition of blaming the entire witchcraft episode on a woman of color instead of the other white Christians actually in power in 1692. Even here, however, the tour guide does not tie this into the overarching narrative of the tour or its concluding messaging, which undercuts any element of structural criticism.⁹⁷² The guide points to structural inequalities of race and colonialism leading to Tituba's accusation in 1692 and the same forces leading to her vilification by nineteenth-century Americans, but stops short of engaging with how these same structural inequalities persist in American culture, leading not only to tourists' continued credulity in racist scapegoating of Tituba and continued mistreatment of people of color by the legal system. Unfortunately, many white tourists would view this kind of racialized scapegoating as a surprise or not see accusations of such racism as credible, and if tour companies and particular guides truly want to help prevent such prejudices and injustices from happening again, they could do so by clearly drawing connections between the results of these inequities in 1692 and the present. Instead, interpretation remains comfortably conciliatory in its engagement with racism. It is barely acknowledged as a system of power relations, and not challenged or even really recognized as persisting in

⁹⁷² "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016.

contemporary American life. Visitors may feel good about themselves for thinking about Tituba's status as an enslaved woman and for correcting mistakes about her, but are never asked to engage with the structural inequities that persist as a result of enslavement and colonialism or view themselves in relation to them.

This failure to engage with Tituba's vilification is particularly glaring given the thematic emphasis tours place on preventing such identity-based scapegoating and narrative formats that entail a great deal of commentary on Salem's tourist landscape past and present. The "Bewitched" walking tour comes closest to identity-based violence by connecting 1692 to scapegoating Muslims after September 11th. The guide asks tourists to leave the tour thinking about the importance of collective action in the face of inequality and unfairness, noting Americans' continued tendency to vilify those they deem outsiders, and challenging them to condemn the prominence of Islamophobia post-9/11.⁹⁷³ Tour guides could integrate racism against African Americans and indigenous persons into this framework even more directly, pointing towards the mistreatment of women of color under colonial law and contemporary criminal justice. Instead, the intersections of race, class, and gender in shaping one's experience with the law and social acceptance in 1692 remains muted and any interrogation of power uneven. Visitors are asked to see that the scapegoating of marginalized groups persists in American life, but not to see how misogyny, racism, and colonialism have remained constant in these kinds of crises. Rather, they appear peripheral to American culture and secondary to other destabilizing inequalities like class.

⁹⁷³ "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

Although paranormal walking tours integrate some discussion of Tituba in their explanations of the Salem Witch Trials, she does not appear as a ghostly figure. Indeed, compared to portrayals of Tituba as a voodoo-practicing menace to colonial New England found in other ostensibly non-supernatural tourist attractions, paranormal walking tours tend to de-emphasize her as a figure of the supernatural.⁹⁷⁴ Given the ways in which Tituba's figuration as a caricature of mystical power and menace elsewhere in Salem for the entertainment of mostly white audiences, this is not necessarily a problem. However, in doing so, tours exclude Tituba from any kind of feminist reclaiming or spiritual revenge against the society and individuals who wronged her. As discussed above, white women's anger and their associations with the macabre and supernatural, appear righteous, allowing them to exercise agency and achieve some sort of retribution against the judges who condemned them. White women's anger is therefore ephemeral, contained within the realms of history and the supernatural but Tituba's does not exist at all. Scholar Sharon Patricia Holland notes that ghosts of enslaved women "force confrontations not usually required" of white audiences.⁹⁷⁵ Denying the existence of a Black female ghost allows white Americans to "disremember a shared past" and protect a white supremacist "American imaginary" untroubled by racism and slavery.⁹⁷⁶

Further as shown below, the supernatural associations guides ascribe to Tituba tend to be her alleged use of voodoo and fortune-telling tricks in 1692, producing her as a

⁹⁷⁴ "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018; "Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts," August 2018; "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "Black Cat," September 2016.

⁹⁷⁵ Sharon Patricia Holland, "Introduction: Raising the Dead," in *The Spectralities Reader*, Kindle Edition.

⁹⁷⁶ Nick Stanley Holland, *Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1998) "Introduction: Raising the Dead," Kindle Edition.

“racialized other” that allows overwhelmingly white visitors to enjoy the Salem Witch Trials as commercial entertainment via the “recommercialization of Black bodies.”⁹⁷⁷ This sort of figuration, particularly when read against Tituba’s construction by the edutainment sites discussed in Chapter Three, constructs Tituba as a wrong-doer, not someone to whom wrong was done. If, as Miles notes, the ghosts of enslaved and colonized persons return as “trouble from the Past” embodying wrongdoing and injustice, Tituba’s lack of spectrality might indicate that guides and tourists do not necessarily read her as a victim of 1692 or view attendant legacies of enslavement and colonialism as issues haunting New England.

The ghosts of enslaved women haunt the historic sites of the South because slavery is deeply enmeshed in notions of Southern history and identity.⁹⁷⁸ As shown by historians of slavery in the North, however, New England memory work has sought to efface enslavement from the region since the eighteenth century, and only in the last few years have public historians sought to reincorporate this history into its landscape.⁹⁷⁹ However, this work of recovering a public memory of New England slavery is marginal and incomplete, and public history in Salem could go further in interpreting the existence of Salem’s enslaved population and connections with the Atlantic trade generally, not just in witchcraft attractions.⁹⁸⁰ In this way, the lack of Black and indigenous spectral presences serve to not only avoid confrontations with slavery in the present but to

⁹⁷⁷ Miles, *Tales*, 123.

⁹⁷⁸ Miles, *Tales*, 16-17.

⁹⁷⁹ See Melish, *Disowning Slavery*; Newell, *Brethren by Nature*; Melish, “Recovering from Slavery,” in *Slavery in Public History*, 103-134.

⁹⁸⁰ Informational Interview, NPS, Salem, Massachusetts, August 23, 2018.

suppress or deny their historical existence as well. This absence seems disturbing since, if ghosts evince “cultural wounds that have never healed,” the denial of Tituba’s spectrality suggests a contingent denial of enslavement and white supremacy as “wounds” in Massachusetts.

In general, tours strip Tituba of any real interiority, anger, or agency in figuring her as another victim of the witch trials. As in the case of the non-profit historic sites, the supernatural and historical walking tours seem to struggle with pushing back against Tituba’s vilification while still affording her complexity and agency. Given the ways that ghost stories center the emotional state and actions of an individual, particularly “difficult” emotions like rage or a desire for retribution, the frequent exclusion of Tituba from these narratives misses opportunities to dig into her complexity and contributes to a cultural tendency to dismiss women of color’s anger to treat it as particularly threatening. White victims can display rage, lay curses, or cause physical torment as ghosts in a way that appears empowering; Tituba receives no similar framing as a supernatural presence. Positioning Tituba as a supernatural figure out for revenge, as is the case for other ghosts, might be read as threatening to white supremacy and uncomfortable for white audiences. Any similar sort of narrative closure or retribution against the people and society that wronged her would condemn not only the men immediately involved in the witch trials but also slavery and white supremacy, systems that white audience members continue to benefit from. The anger of an unidentified victim of witchcraft seeking revenge against the Sheriff who tormented her might be experienced at a distance with a fun thrill. In the case of the spirit of a woman of color seeking similar revenge against failures of the legal

system and colonial violence, white audiences might read her anger as threatening to their own positions of privilege, resulting in feelings of fright for themselves rather than empowerment for the victimized. White victims of the witch trials receive some moral or narrative closure through supernatural stories, but Tituba and other people of color victimized in 1692 are denied even that kind of emotional justice or redress. This failure to validate the disproportionate forces of white patriarchy placed on Tituba in the context of a genre meant to highlight the worst aspects of human nature and society underscores the degree to which white comfort is prized over historical confrontations and any serious effort to challenge white privilege.

When Tituba does appear as a paranormal presence, her magical potency remains sinister not empowering. Her supposed ability to command the supernatural functions to build her up as a threatening figure for the entertainment of white audiences, not as a narrative device to center her in her own story or speak to her historical specificity. On one tour, the guide portrayed Tituba as the “real” start of the Salem Witch Trials who, despite not being Black herself, learned voodoo from enslaved Africans while working as a slave in Barbados. She continued practicing it in Massachusetts, at which point she taught white girls stories and fortunetelling tricks, causing them to collapse into hysterical fits of Calvinist guilt.⁹⁸¹ This kind of figuration of Tituba as the threatening foreigner and lone “real” witch of 1692 reverberates through marketing around October’s “Haunted Happenings,” an amalgam of various spooky thrills including figures from the Salem Witch Trials, mythical creatures like vampires, Wicca, and Hollywood horror. In

⁹⁸¹ “Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts,” August 2018.

this way, attractions and boosterism still demarcate the only woman of color to play a major role in 1692's interpretation as a supernatural threat, less innocent and less worthy of our sympathy as the white victims.⁹⁸² Tituba's integrity as a historical actor or recognition of her suffering in 1692 is erased or commodified to provide white tourists with a racialized fright. This contributes to a larger culture of erasing, minimizing, or framing of women of colors' emotional experiences and historical suffering.

The limitations of the politics of sympathy in Tituba's characterization also align with Lynnell Thomas' study of tourism and race in New Orleans, where she finds that "inclusive" histories and superficially diverse representations of African Americans actually reinforce racial stratification.⁹⁸³ Ultimately, tourist discourses and economic practices produce African American communities as "objects of desire" that "invite imitation" but also as "sites of disaster" that need "remediation."⁹⁸⁴ In her examination of walking tours, she found that tour guides presented Black history as entertainment so as to not offend white tour-goers, emphasized an image of exceptional and benign slavery as it existed under French law, and reframed coercive acts such as slave-master relationships as romantically enviable.⁹⁸⁵ This also has the effect of portraying incidences of overt violence as the result of individual action rather than systemic inequality.⁹⁸⁶ For

⁹⁸² Tituba's construction as an actual witch evidently extends beyond Salem. Daytona Beach used to offer an escape room experience themed around fleeing the clutches of Tituba, the "first witch." See "Escape Game: Ghost of Tituba, the first Salem Witch," Lonely Planet, <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/florida/daytona-beach/activities/escape-game-ghost-of-tituba-the-first-salem-witch/a/pa-act/v-69378P1/361898>

⁹⁸³ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 46.

⁹⁸⁴ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 23.

⁹⁸⁵ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 53.

⁹⁸⁶ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 53-91.

Thomas, this is a feature of “post-civil rights discourse” which “fulfilled visitors’ desire for Black representation and multiculturalist rhetoric” while simultaneously alleviating guilt over slavery and racial inequities.⁹⁸⁷

As noted above, tour guides produce Tituba as a racialized thrill, associating her with voodoo and mysticism for the entertainment of overwhelmingly white audiences, positioning her as a genuinely witchy figure in Salem. At the same time, they position her as a “disaster” for inadvertently contributing to the outbreak of the witch trials, suffering under maltreatment by Parris and imprisonment, and confessing to witchcraft. Ghost stories also obscure or minimize the power dynamics of white supremacy and slavery by presenting Tituba as a quasi-supernatural figure who could send Salem into upheaval with her storytelling and confession of witchcraft. The terror of Tituba comes from any suggestion that she might exercise power to mediate her circumstances as an enslaved woman or take action, even supernaturally, against the forces that oppressed her, not from the violence enabled by colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

Native Americans

A general cultural unwillingness to confront American colonialism as a system of violence and oppression also appears in broader treatments of slavery and indigenous New England. On tours focusing on the Salem Witch Trials, warfare with the Abenaki appears as a framing device alongside disease and drought as shorthand for social stress and danger, or a reason for the governor to be away from Massachusetts and unable to

⁹⁸⁷ Thomas, *Desire and Disaster*, 83.

intervene in the witch trials.⁹⁸⁸ The only indigenous presence in Salem is Tituba, brought into Massachusetts from her home in the Caribbean. Again, a Native figure appears to be truly a foreign presence on American soil. Indeed, slavery itself appears alienated from New England, as most interpreters do not mention the presence of slavery in the region beyond Samuel Parris bringing in Tituba from Barbados and then selling her away again to cover her jail fees. In one case where a guide did refer to “slavery” in general, he commented that she was indigenous not Black, unlike “most” slaves.⁹⁸⁹ The lack of regional specificity in this statement belies the presence of slavery in New England and in Salem specifically, and actively erases the enslavement and forced relocation of indigenous persons throughout the Atlantic world. Native Americans are alienated from their own land, positioned as a threat from “outside,” and slavery itself appears as a foreign imposition by a lone individual. This kind of narrative framing also denies Native survival and figures them as a particular historical threat alongside smallpox or strife with the King of England while simultaneously distancing white Americans from any guilt or confrontation with colonial violence or slavery. Even other tours with a broader chronological and topical focus reinforce this kind of temporal and geographic alienation. Commonly, guides mention that Salem used to be called “Naumkeag” by Native tribes, but that the first English settlers renamed it “Salem.”⁹⁹⁰ What happened to the people who gave Salem its original name goes unmentioned. With no further narrative

⁹⁸⁸ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁸⁹ “Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts,” August 2018.

⁹⁹⁰ “The Salem Morning Stroll,” August 2018.

engagement with Native Americans, they appear only as a “before” to mark the beginnings of colonial expansion and American progress.

White Men

In both historical and paranormal walking tours, guides tend to create a sense of horror and emotional immediacy with the audience by crafting a narrative in which elite men victimized the most vulnerable members of society. Tours set the stage for 1692, explaining that years of tensions had built up in Salem due in a large part to the wealth gap between the rich merchants of Salem Town and the poor farmers of Salem Village. Typically in these tours, the rich men of the town capitalized on the initial cases of bewitchment for self-aggrandizement. Cotton Mather, for instance, seized on the trials as a chance to test his theories on witchcraft – outlined in publications – and gain acclaim as an intellectual and spiritual leader for the colonies. Thomas Putnam, a wealthy landowner from Salem Village, entered the most accusations of any single individual during the trials to settle personal grudges and acquire more land. Meanwhile Sheriff Corwin, related to Judge Jonathan Corwin by blood and Judge Bartholomew Gedney by marriage, colluded to either seize the assets of accused witches or skim profits off of proceeds meant to go to the Crown from this seized property. Judge Hathorne, meanwhile, used his position as a judge to pursue his own religious zealotry by ridding his community of traces of the Devil. Because of their positions of privilege, these men viewed others in their community, particularly women and the poor and especially Tituba, as disposable, and nobody besides the absent governor could intervene to check their power. They could

also act largely without opposition because they had formed networks with one another and thus could act with the protection of class solidarity.⁹⁹¹ According to these tours, the trials only ended when the privileges of white elite manhood came under threat with the accusation of the governor's wife. As noted above, men used their positions as heads of the church, the family, and the law to pressure the afflicted into entering accusations of witchcraft and coerced them into denouncing particular neighbors engaged in land disputes or other feuds with their parents or by taking them on tours around the colony pointing out witches.⁹⁹² While girls could take on power not normally afforded to them by Puritan society by participating in these trials, they also could not effectively challenge the proceedings or refuse to cooperate, because ultimately, the men at the top of society could control them with corporal punishment, imprisonment, or even execution, and they had the absolute legal right to do so.

In these retellings, the Salem Witch Trials can be seen as a function of economic and social divides, illustrative of the dangers of unchecked privilege. Most guides frame the Salem Witch Trials as an instance in which a few elites used their social and economic networks to control politics and the law for their own benefit through corruption and disproportionate power, commenting to the effect that "not much has changed" since 1692 in this regard.⁹⁹³ Visitors respond to these kinds of statements in the

⁹⁹¹ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁹² "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁹³ "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018, "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018; "Black Cat," September 2016; "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018; "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018. Many of the edutainment sites and the Bewitched After Dark Tour claim that neighbors accused one another in order to steal their property for

affirmative, often chiming in with their own remarks about corrupt politicians or the rich only looking out for themselves.⁹⁹⁴ Critically, however, patriarchy itself is not indicted in these formulations. Instead, guides frame these men's ability to victimize others as a function of economic or political privilege without much or any attention paid to how their positions as white men informed their ability to exercise power. However, the continual centering of corrupt elites points towards anxieties about extremes of privilege enabling abuse.

The constructions of white patriarchal privilege in these guided tours point towards a near reversal of assumptions about class from nineteenth century interpretations of Salem Witchcraft in which social privilege conferred personal worth and suitability for power. The disproportionate control of elites over society, the law, and politics connotes corruption, nepotism, and the breakdown of morals and social order rather than the assurance thereof. Here, the Salem Witch Trials occurred not because of a breakdown of extreme patriarchal privilege but because of an excess of it. Fears of middle- and working-class tourists losing out in this imbalanced economic and social system appear in characterizations of Philip English. Tours stop in front of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, originally founded in the seventeenth century by English after the

themselves. This stems from an erroneous belief that if one accused someone of witchcraft and got them convicted, they would be able to take their property for themselves. This has been disproven, and in fact assets from those convicted of witchcraft would be forfeited to the state. See Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 141-142; Ray, *Satan and Salem*, 175-176. Guides at the 1692 Witchcraft Walk state that corrupt officials embezzled from this money.

⁹⁹⁴ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

conclusion of the witch trials.⁹⁹⁵ In most if these stories, English's defining feature is his wealth, although a tour guide on the "1692 Witchcraft Walk" in 2016 also noted that he might have appeared as an outsider to English Puritans for being a French Huguenot married to a woman whose mother had been accused of witchcraft years earlier. He was able to weather accusations of witchcraft better than his neighbors due to extreme wealth – he could afford better prison conditions and bribe his way into an escape to New York to wait out the trials with his wife's relatives.⁹⁹⁶ Most narrative emphasis of English and St. Peter's focuses, however, on his return after the end of the witch trials. Guides relate how his extensive property had been confiscated by Sheriff Corwin and broken up. Despite spending the rest of his life filing lawsuits to recover it, he never managed to restore his fortunes.⁹⁹⁷ This story about Corwin does not feature in any significant way in tourist literature prior to the 1970s, but since then it has become a fixture in historical walking tours and edutainment attractions such as the Salem Witch History Museum and Witch Dungeon. Perhaps this points to the persistent economic anxieties of living under late-stage capitalism, particularly after the 2008 recession and collapse of the housing market, when Americans seem acutely aware of financial precarity, uncertain property-ownership, and resentment towards elite corruption that exacerbate this fragility.⁹⁹⁸ By

⁹⁹⁵ "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

⁹⁹⁶ "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016.

⁹⁹⁷ "1692 Witchcraft Walk," September 2016 and August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018; "Hocus Pocus," September 2016.

⁹⁹⁸ For more on the middle class and classed anxieties, see Robert H. Frank, *Falling Behind: How Rising Inequality Harms the Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) and Lawrence R. Samuel, *The American Middle Class: A Cultural History* (New York: Routledge, 2014). For discussion of economic decline, deindustrialization, and the loss of blue collar jobs in Salem, see Hill, "Salem as Witch City," 283-296.

rooting these fears in Salem in 1692, guides center anxieties about the longevity and inevitability of extreme privilege and abuse. Given the responses of tourists grumbling about how “of course” the rich people get away with the most, these connections resonate.⁹⁹⁹

As noted above, guides comment on the misogyny of seventeenth-century society but stop short of explicit interrogation of patriarchy at a systemic level. This persistent blindness towards masculinity and patriarchy as constructs indicates the degree to which Americans naturalize gendered power relations and view inequities as past.¹⁰⁰⁰ As well, it points to a fear of making white men uncomfortable about their own privilege by engaging with how it has been constantly rearticulated and reified over time at the expense of women and people of color. Such an explicit discussion of racialized and gendered privilege might discomfit men who find themselves identifying with the perpetrators of 1692 rather than the victims. Indeed, the disproportionate narrative emphasis on male victims and economics as a motive for the witch trials may point towards an inability among men to identify or sympathize with female victims condemned in part on the basis of misogyny. This genders sexism and its consequences as female concerns rather than an institutional failing that white men, as the beneficiaries of that system, must dismantle themselves. This favoring of male comfort over efforts to critically engage white patriarchy or encourage identification with women and people of color upholds a societal tendency to treat white men as the default and perpetuates the

⁹⁹⁹ 1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018 8; “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018; “Hocus Pocus,” September 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Paquette, accessed online.

centering of white male experiences at the expense of others. Again, this suggests an anxiety by white men about having their positionality called out and challenged. By facilitating this unwillingness by many white men to identify with others, Salem tourism contributes to a cultural and political tendency to treat the problems of women and people of color as niche, secondary in importance to the concerns of white men.

Historical walking tours depict men in a wider range of roles than the museum sites, including them among the ranks of the accused, accusers, and bewitched alongside women and girls. The personal qualities associated with these roles are not essentialized by gender. In these interpretations, men appear as capable of duplicity, greed, and spite as the initially afflicted girls, if not more so, because their disproportionate social power allowed them to manipulate the bewitched children for personal gain. Guides with the “Bewitched” and “1692 Witchcraft Walk” tours, for instance, incorporate discussion of Thomas Putnam as a leading participant in the witch trials as an accuser, centering his desire to acquire more land and settle personal grudges against people like Rebecca Nurse, who owned some of his former property and once quarreled with him over his inability to keep his livestock from wandering onto her farm.¹⁰⁰¹ Guides also incorporate more of the male accused witches, including John Willard, a constable who had arrested many of the women executed for witchcraft before repenting and falling prey to the courts himself, or Samuel Wardwell Jr., a fortune teller.¹⁰⁰² In conjunction, with the more active roles afforded women in walking tours’ interpretations, the worst stereotypes about

¹⁰⁰¹ “1692 Witchcraft Walk,” September 2016 and August 2018; “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018.

¹⁰⁰² “Bewitched After Dark,” September 2016 and August 2018; “The Salem Morning Stroll,” August 2018; “Salem 1692 Witchcraft,” August 2018.

gender seen in the edutainment attractions are ameliorated. But again, without engaging with how structural factors of race, class, and gender shaped colonial constructions of these qualities and informed individuals' identification as witches, tourists get the comfort of pushing back against sexism without the discomfiture of confronting the systemic inequality that engendered it.

At the same time, however, the historical and paranormal tours do center agency as the defining characteristic of manhood in a way that is not contextualized within seventeenth-century understandings of gender or contemporary cultural criticism of patriarchy. As described above, paranormal and walking tour guides construct men who abused their positions of power as the architects of 1692. The girls who participated in the trials did so because they lacked any power in the regular course of their lives, only to find themselves beholden to ministers, judges, and other male elites formally at the head of the trials. At the opposite end of the moral spectrum, guides do seem to perpetuate a desire to locate heroics in the bodies and actions of white men. While white women appear more active in their own defense in walking tours' interpretations, figures like Giles Corey and Philip English continue to hold an outsized place in the narrative and are singled out for praise in their defiance of injustice. The "Stroll" and "Bewitched" tours, for instance, highlight the actual and moral agency of Samuel Wardwell in turning against the legal abuses he had been complicit in as a constable and going to his death with a redeemed clear conscience.¹⁰⁰³ Every walking tour incorporates Giles Corey in their tour stops. Indeed, on the "Haunted Footsteps" tour, Corey and Corwin are the only

¹⁰⁰³ "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

figures from the Salem Witch Trials mentioned by name; the rest are reduced to unidentified spirits rattling their chains and screaming from the site of the old jail.¹⁰⁰⁴ Corey's history of violence against his dependents gets largely set aside in favor of a straightforwardly heroic narrative in which he openly denounced the afflicted girls and members of the court as corrupt liars, refused to cooperate in his own trial, and endured intense physical torture for the sake of defending his family's property and his principles.¹⁰⁰⁵ The ghost tours take his agency further by recounting stories about how his spirit has appeared throughout Salem's history as a portent of disaster.¹⁰⁰⁶ In this way, Corey becomes something of a moral center and a figure of resistance within the immediate context of 1692 and a lingering embodiment of the lessons of the Salem Witch Trials. As the concluding note to the Salem Witch Trials, Giles Corey's ghost, that of a white man with property, becomes functionally the custodian of Salem's morality and fortunes. Giles Corey becomes the personhood many tourists will probably associate with the witch trials, particularly given his narrative importance at other attractions. The abstracted figure of the witch upon which any number of meanings are imposed remains female; the historically specific individuals with personhood, agency, and likely lingering meaning for tourists remain male.

Overall, however, few male ghosts associated with the witch trials appear in paranormal tourism, perhaps because they had more legitimate or earthly opportunities

¹⁰⁰⁴ "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018.

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018; "Spellbound Voodoo, Vampires, and Ghosts," August 2018; "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "Black Cat," September 2016; "The Salem Morning Stroll," August 2018; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," August 2018; "Bewitched After Dark," September 2016 and August 2018.

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Black Cat," September 2016; "Hocus Pocus," September 2016; "1692 Witchcraft Walk," August 2018; "Haunted Footsteps," August 2018.

for redress. As described above, women associated with the trials appear as supernatural figures of vengeance, taking action against the men who victimized them with curses or through spectral torment. Philip English, by contrast, gets earthly revenge by seizing or placing a lien on Sheriff Corwin's body in order to regain property, and then by building an Anglican church in the heart of a Puritan community. Even Corey's ghost gets represented as a portent of generalized disaster rather than a ghost seeking retribution; before he died, he prevented Sheriff Corwin from seizing his property and managed to defy the court system. The perpetrators of the witch trials – the ministers, judges, and constables – appear in supernatural tales primarily as the targets of their victims' otherworldly rage. The "Black Cat" tour offers a rare exception by incorporating a ghost story about Judge Jonathan Hathorne appearing over his own grave, staring down at its desecration, somehow aware of the condemnation he has received since his death.¹⁰⁰⁷ Here, his ghost serves a similar narrative role as the victims of the accused witches' curses as an outlet for people's wish that the perpetrators of the witch trials had to suffer some consequence or at least feel remorse for their actions. Through these figures, Salem is "haunted" by the dangers of extreme privilege and a lack of accountability for those in power. The historical walking tours construct these elite men as avatars of classed anxieties who, despite their sins, remained untouchable and largely unremorseful for what they had done. The supernatural tours echo these same anxieties but force the specters of the judges to face some consequence for their actions by having to face the anger of their victims and shame from subsequent generations. In a way, this allows

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Black Cat," September 2016.

tourists to “revisit” a tragic event and change it.¹⁰⁰⁸ This perhaps aligns with configurations of spectralities by Avery Gordon and Derrida, who conceptualize the ghost as invoking both the past and the future. For Derrida, the ghost is simultaneously a “revenant” and an “arrivant,” while Gordon positions hauntings as something of a call to action, “producing a something to be done.”¹⁰⁰⁹ This suggestion that many powerful people can only face justice from the history books and the supernatural, taken together with historical tours’ acceptance of corruption of elites as a given, points towards a fear of the continued inability to hold powerful to account in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

Overall, Salem’s walking tours do trouble the role of gender in the Salem Witch Trials and complicate constructions of the afflicted children, accused women, and, to varying degrees, Tituba. However, they also contain misogyny, colonialism, the violence they engender, as well as anger or resistance to these forces in the realm of history, the supernatural, or both. Further, the emphasis in ghost tours on the spirits of white women indicates that the systemic forces that contributed to their suffering have been suppressed in public memory, troubled only by ghosts, but also that Tituba’s anger or resistance by people of color are largely erased. Instead, guides position a de-racinated, de-gendered legacy of class struggle and a need to respect an amorphous sense of “difference” as the

¹⁰⁰⁸ See del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader*,” Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities,” Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader*,” Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities,” Kindle Edition; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

“usable past” of 1692. The radical potential of Salem’s history, both spectral and corporeal, remains unrealized.

Conclusion

If the tourist attractions surrounding the Salem Witch Trials truly want to commemorate 1692 as well as commercialize it, they must prioritize reworking their interpretations to build empathy with historical actors instead of otherizing them for shock and entertainment value. By humanizing the past, privileging the roles of women, especially women of color, in 1692 instead of locating agency and heroism in White men, and deconstructing the dynamics of colonial New England communities that led to witch persecutions, witchcraft tourism might encourage tourists at various axes of privilege – race, class, and gender – to identify with those of more marginalized identities. By engaging systemic inequality and pushing back against a cultural tendency to treat the stories of White men as universal and the experiences of everyone else as niche, witchcraft interpretation could help instill a greater sense of urgency for intersectional identification and activism. In turn, forcing an overwhelmingly White tourist body to confront their own privilege could help place the burden of dismantling inequality on those most in a position to benefit from it instead of reifying assumptions by White Americans that people of color, women, and other marginalized groups should overcome their own oppression or not be too bothered by it since, as the existing witchcraft tourism industry suggests, things are not as bad as they used to be.

Curators and educators might look to historic sites for how they advance a fairly complicated context for the Salem Witch Trials, but strengthen their interpretations by incorporating colonialism and gender into the cultural, economic, and political world of the seventeenth century. Instead of centering women and people of color for shock value,

attractions should show them fully embedded in their communities, highlighting the interconnections between the public, the domestic, and individual in driving witchcraft accusations. By allowing the reasons for the witch crisis to appear complicated and never fully comprehensible, sites could educate visitors on how history is actually done, allow them to see the full complexity of 1692, and perhaps encourage the application of more nuanced thinking beyond a vacation to Salem.

Critically, when incorporating colonialism and misogyny into interpretation as factors in the Witch Trials alongside political conflict, warfare, or economic stresses, interpretation must name racism, misogyny, patriarchy instead of talking around them. Attractions should explicitly discuss why some women would have been more likely to be seen as witches and why Tituba would have been singled out for blame. By giving patriarchy and racism historically specific contours, attractions would place tourists in a position to better understand 1692 and develop specific continuities with the present with an immediate impact on their own lives. In turn, this could facilitate discussions of specific action items and awareness for visitors to take away with them and apply in their own lives. At the very least, hopefully interpreters could more thoroughly delve into how foundational misogyny and racism are in American life and convey the ways in which they are maintained at different historical moments.

Interrogating patriarchy and racism should also complicate visitors' understandings of these forces by demonstrating how they also delimit Whiteness and masculinity, highlighting how these categories are constructs rather than a default. For instance, by unpacking the violence and poor reputations that contributed to the credibility of

witchcraft charges against Burroughs, Corey, or Proctor, sites could illustrate the ways in which White patriarchy has been enforced among men. Attractions could also complicate simplistic characterizations of colonial understandings of gendered power and misogyny by unpacking how excessive violence, particularly violence against dependents, led to hostility and traction for accusations in 1692.

Having established a complicated understanding of colonial New England writ large and emphasized the institutional nature of inequalities at play in the witch trials, attractions should re-center women as individuals with historical specificity and agency. Historic houses like the Rebecca Nurse Homestead would be particularly well-positioned to relate the personal to the contextual and connect the dynamics of a particular domestic space to the wider community and region in an escalating witchcraft panic. Most obviously, when interpreting the roles of particular people in the witch trials, interpreters should do away with earlier stories that seek to make the Salem Witch Trials easily comprehensible by reducing people such as Tituba or the afflicted children to caricatures of evil teenage girls or frightening women of color. By examining the multiple ways in which women participated in the witch trials with sensitivity and attention to historical detail, attractions could lead a discussion of the systemic inequalities of race, colonialism, class, and gender that as well as the ways in which individuals exerted agency within those systems. Attractions could also complicate representations of Burroughs, Proctor, and Corey instead of constructing them as the loci of civic virtue in Salem and essentializing which category of person is most capable of wielding public authority.

Finally, many tours and attractions already interpret the tourist industry itself. It seems very feasible for them to take this interpretation further than merely correcting facts like Tituba's race or focusing so much blame on the afflicted girls. Instead, they might address the racism and sexism that led these narratives to form. Provided with a historical counter-narrative as well as evidence for how distortions have taken place, perhaps tourists would be more willing to adapt their thinking and absorb new information instead of retreating back to whatever version of events they had heard first, as interpreters have indicated can be a problem at their sites.

Since the nineteenth century, Salem tourism has rearticulated its core narrative of heroic white masculinity and the dangers of unruly racialized femininity in ways that ensure the evolution and continuation of white patriarchal power dynamics in American culture. By the end of the 2010s, this led interpretation to deploy narratives of gendered colonial violence in vaguely progressive trappings, leaning on amorphous condemnations of "intolerance" or how "bad things used to be for women" to paper over the racism and misogyny that continue to characterize many contemporary treatments of the Salem Witch Trials. Visitors may be seen to align themselves with values such as "tolerance" and position themselves as "good" white people without demanding that they interrogate their own privilege or truly discomfit them in any way. At best, tourist attractions tend to compartmentalize racism and misogyny in their interpretations, for instance by noting that Tituba's position as an enslaved woman made her vulnerable to accusations but without weaving colonial power dynamics into the contextual framing of 1692, sustaining race- and gender-analysis throughout discussions of the witchcraft crisis, or by drawing

direct connections to racialized and gendered violence in contemporary life that are a direct result of cultural, political, and economic foundations from the colonial period. This sort of historical compartmentalization, pointing to the mistreatment of women and people of color as a past misfortune, often in an uncomplicated way rhetorically distanced from contemporary identity-based oppressions, distances visitors from confronting those forces in their own lives. This might encourage visitors to view racism, misogyny, and colonialism as problems of the past, which undermines the work of contemporary activists by making their concerns appear less urgent or downright unnecessary. At the same time, somewhat contradictorily, drawing attention to issues such as gender-based and racist violence without naming or engaging them naturalizes these forces as inevitable, enduring, and to be taken as a fact of life for women and people of color rather than active oppressions that are continually reified by generations of Americans. In this way, much of the witchcraft tourism industry is an exercise in cossetting White fragility; White visitors can take comfort in false notions of progress that actively inhibit truly progressive efforts and be reassured by narratives that frame challenges to white patriarchal authority as irrational, dangerous, and almost literally diabolical.

Interpretation of 1692 ought to be able to engage with race, gender, and class as systemic relationships of power with historical specificity that could, when understood in their colonial context and connected to the present, advance the work of dismantling inequalities in contemporary America. The continuous emphasis on the evil that results from women – particularly young women – and people of color exerting public power instead of on the harm done to them suggests that the horror at the heart of witchcraft

tourism is the fear of White, middle class Americans of what would happen to them if white supremacy and patriarchy fell away.

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