'Haunted Happenings': Dark Tourism Events and Supernatural Placemaking in Salem, USA

Introduction

In places associated with witchery, the supernatural is often appropriated for place-making and, subsequently, consumed as visitor experiences. Notwithstanding Neo-Paganism or modern sorcery still being practiced in parts of Africa, South America, or the Caribbean, traditionally witchcraft was the invocation of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events. Witchcraft is defined differently within disparate socio-cultural and historical contexts. Stereotypical Western perspectives often focus upon acts of black magic, conjuration, pacts with Satan and, consequently, community witch-hunts and Catholic-led inquisitions. Indeed, popular cultural depictions of witchcraft, certainly pre-20th century, typically involve elderly disfigured crones (that is, ostracized females) in black conical hats, magically transported by flying brooms to gather secretly in the dead of night, accompanied by black cats, and partaking in sacrificial cannibalism or orgiastic rites with demons, whilst casting malevolent spells over spirited cauldrons upon the unfortunate. Despite these chimerical illusions, witchcraft as a cultural phenomenon was a blend of social bigotry, religious persecution, theology, and folklore, whereby diabolism across Europe was inherent during the 14th to 18th centuries. Of course, contemporary media and cultural renditions of witchery have altered the witch stereotype (Hill, 2011). It is here that Partridge (2004/2006) notes how a wealth of occultural ideas today feed into and are resourced by popular culture. These include the postmodern witch and their esoteric force (Brînzeu, 2011), resulting in a sense of 'occulture' as a key feature of the 're-enchantment of the West' (Partridge, 2004/2006). Nevertheless, while witchcraft exists more in the imagination of contemporaries, rather than in any objective reality, legacies of

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distant demonology have permutated contemporary places and people in terms of difficult heritage.

This conceptual paper's purpose is to critically examine this permutation of witchcraft, particularly through the visitor economy and dark tourism. Indeed, legacies of witchcraft are well rehearsed in Salem, Massachusetts, USA, where infamous Salem Witch Trials of 1692/93 resulted in numerous women (and men) being executed for witchery. The Witch Trials not only became a turning point of American legal and social history, but also became entrenched in the mythmaking of Salem. Today, Salem is branded as '*Witch City*' whereby the destination has become synonymous with the supernatural and the area cauterized with metaphysical symbols. Supernatural narratives of Salem's cultural trauma are commercialised through dark tourism (events) including 1692 trial re-enactments, Halloween parties and parades, seances, pop-up psychic conventions, and voodoo doll stands. Importantly, Salem's annual month-long Halloween festival – *Haunted Happenings* – is the denatured sanctification of the 1692 trials. Held every October, this dark tourism event offers a Disneyfied interpretation of its history and a kitsch glimpse of Salem's association with supernatural storytelling. As such, Salem's history and cultural trauma have become a desirable focus of the tourist gaze and prompts the emergence of restructured authenticity of the host community through destination placemaking. This intersection of dark tourism and placemaking has influenced the visual culture of the touristscape, seen through the kitschification and fragmentation of Salem's dubious past. As an auratic form of cultural expression, embodiment of the urban supernatural in Salem provides a unique case to critically explore difficult heritage, collective memory, and social identity, as well as tourism placemaking.

Consequently, we evaluate the *Haunted Happenings* festival within the realms of contemporary placemaking. We draw upon conceptual themes of difficult heritage and dark tourism, semiotics, collective memory, and social identity. We also call upon Foucault's 'heterotopology' – that is, the notion of certain cultural, institutional, and discursive spaces that are somehow 'Othered' – and which are places that can be disturbing, intense, incompatible, contradictory, or transforming. Moreover, we argue Salem is where material realities and (re)imagined supernatural spaces collide to co-create a place where people consume dark tourism events of reflection and illusion, as well as engaging with atrocities and misdeeds of the problematic past. In turn, Salem and its commercial supernatural placemaking exports its

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tragic history, which not only expresses difficult heritage but also, and perhaps more importantly, ruptures the past to reclaim cultural and mercantile advantage. Ultimately, we lay out a theoretical blueprint where placemaking of Salem within realms of the urban supernatural and cultural trauma (re)creates Salem into a Foucauldian heterotopia. Firstly, however, we outline Salem as a case study and highlight its history as a basis for supernatural placemaking.

Salem: The Witch Trials and Beyond

For both Salem Town and Salem Village in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (now Salem and Danvers, Massachusetts, respectively), the Witch Trials held between February 1692 and May 1693 eternally marred over four centuries of rich historical significance. Notably, while Salem Village (Danvers) served as the geographical epicentre of the Salem witch hysteria, it later distanced itself from cultural associations of the Witch Trials and present-day Salem. Although both communities have memorialised the Salem Witch Trials, Danvers chose to capitalise on its agricultural origins in terms of destination branding. Indeed, while Danvers is known as 'Onion Town' - referencing an onion breed introduced by Danver farmers in the eighteenth century - Salem has become *the* 'Witch City.' However, apart from witchery, Salem is also affiliated to Nathanial Hawthorne and classic American literature, Alexander Graham Bell and his first public demonstrations of the telephone, birthplace of the National Guard, Samuel McIntire and Federal-style architecture, and the board game of Monopoly and Parker Brother's gaming company. Salem also has a rich maritime history and was one of the first seaports to trade with Africa and Asia, where peppercorns were first introduced to North America. Yet, Salem is infamously *Witch City*, and its synonymity with thaumaturgy and home of 'American horror' is inescapable.

Salem's Witch Trials characterised one of the most prolific periods of American history. The people of Essex County and neighbouring North Shore communities succumbed to speculated Satanic biddings and spectral rulings of hysterical 'witches.' As demonic *female* figures of fear within cultural representations, witches have long been documented (Stone and Morten, 2022). One of the earliest records is contained in the Biblical Old Testament of 1 Samuel, thought to be inscribed between 931 B.C. and 721 B.C. It tells the tale of King Saul who sought the Witch of Endor to summon the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel, to help him

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defeat the Philistine army. However, until the 1400s, Christian liturgy repudiated the existence of witches, and trying someone for the crime of being a witch was considered antithetical. Nonetheless, European belief in witches during the medieval period was commonplace and a certain 'witch hysteria' occurred. Indeed, between the mid-1400s and 1660, approximately 80,000 alleged witches were executed (Levack [1987], 2006). The mania was largely due to the publication of *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1486, (often translated as 'The Hammer of Witches'), a must-go-to guide authored by two well-respected German Dominicans. The book was a reference on the identification, hunting, and interrogation of witches (Davies, 2017).

The publication of *Daemonolgie* in 1597 by King James VI of Scotland (and reissued in 1603 under his reign as James I of England) also offered a study on demonology. Authored as a philosophical thesis on necromancy, which later inspired William Shakespeare and his *Macbeth* play, the three-book series of *Daemonolgie* aided witchcraft reform. During the 17th century, Europe's witch hysteria dissipated, though it very much permeated the New World. Established Puritans who had escaped religious and social persecution in England: the northern English colonies of early USA were impinged by the aftermath of Great Britain's wars with France, with colonial settlers living in fear of attack from neighbouring indigenous tribes, as well as the threat of smallpox epidemics. Moreover, Salem by the late 1600's was a socially divided community, worsened by hegemonic struggles of two leading families – the Porters and the Putnam's. Property and ownership squabbles were commonplace, and litigiousness was rampant. Against this fractious background, the Salem Witch Trials were borne of the need for a scapegoat and were the solution to their inevitable 'witch problem.' As with other witchcraft encounters, the process of finding witches began with personal suspicions or community rumours. In the case of Salem, it began when 9-year-old Elizabeth Parris and 11-year-old Abigail Williams suffered body contortions, uncontrolled screaming, and fits – maladies that might be explained by modern medicine. With increasing numbers of people beginning to exhibit similar symptoms, the first three women were incriminated for witchcraft. Sarah Good, Sarah Osborn, and Tituba (an enslaved woman) became the initial accused: with Tituba subsequently indicting others of occultism. Over 150 people were prosecuted of sorcery and on 10 June 1692, Bridget Bishop (who had been charged - but cleared - of witchery 12 years earlier) was the first to be executed. Of course, the Salem Witch Trials and executions came about from a combination of church and community politics, economic competition, faulty religious thinking, family feuds, and hysterical (ill) children, all of which unfolded in a vacuum

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of political authority. In total, 19 people (5 men and 14 women) were taken to Proctor's Ledge in Salem and hanged from a black locust tree. Another five individuals died in custody and were refused Christian burials. Additionally, Giles Corey, an octogenarian, upon being accused of witchcraft refused to enter a plea. Thus, he was subjected to *peine forte et dure* ('strong and hard punishment') and pressed beneath heavy stones for two days to until he died. Even two dogs were put to death for their unwitting canine part of the witch hysteria, as demons in animal form were believed to administer a witch's bidding.

The Witch Trials' main judiciary players monopolized the witchcraft delirium to assert Puritan hegemony and suppress religious dissidence. For the first time in history, witchcraft accusations were non-discriminatory, and anyone from the elderly and affluent to the young and downtrodden could be accused. Historically, the most reliable way to ensnare a witch was through confession (D'Amairo, 1992). However, in Salem, a confession or the naming of other witch practitioners secured one's survival, while professions of innocence proved guilt and assured execution. The aftermath of the Salem Witch Trials signalled a pivotal point in American history where actions previously forged by European medieval discourse ushered in an enlightenment. As early as January 1697, the General Court of Massachusetts declared a day of atonement for the Trials. During the same month, Samuel Sewall, a presiding Trial judge, admitted his own errors during proceedings. By 1702, the General Court declared the Witch Trials as unlawful; while in 1706, Ann Putnam Jr. publicly apologized for her participation in the Witch Trials, the only one of the accusers to do so. In 1711, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts exonerated twenty-two convicted individuals and paid £600 to victims' families. However, it was not until 1957 that the state of Massachusetts formally apologized for the Trials. Finally, in August 2022, the last of those convicted were fully exonerated, some 330 years after the original Witch Trials.

During the intervening years, the abuses of the Trials have had a profound impact on American legal and social processes. Indeed, the Trials contributed changes in U.S. court procedures, including a right to legal representation, as well as the presumption of innocence rather than guilt. Moreover, the Witch Trials morphed into 20th century metaphors for persecution of minority groups. This was largely down to playwright Arthur Miller's *The Crucible (1953),* a prominent theatrical production which used Salem's witch hysteria as an allegorical commentary on the 'Red Scare' of McCarthyism and 1950's anticommunism. Meanwhile, in 1992, during the Witch Trials Tercentenary, Holocaust survivor and human

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rights activist, Elie Wiesel, delivered a Witch Trials Memorial dedication. He implored the power of collective memory to steadfastly intervene in the repetition of tragic history (Trask, 1992).

Previously, in 1900, L. Frank Baum published his novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, (later adapted in a 1939 musical fantasy movie) a monumental tale of the supernatural that transgressed multiple cultures. The story advocated a nuanced look at witchcraft and magic, and dichotomies between good and evil; except in this instance, both the hero and villain were witches. Baum's influential novel (and his later series of *Oz* books) was a catalyst in creating pop-culture icons that inspired an internationally accepted characterization of something that had previously signified devil worship, fear, and superstition. In part, this change in social beliefs of the supernatural helped secure Salem's socially sanctioned reputation as a destination if not *of* the occult, then certainly one *associated* with it. Indeed, through the pop-cultural osmosis of the witch and (her) image, Salem has been the backdrop for many television and film dramas, horror, and comedy productions including, but not limited to, *Bewitched* (a sit-com series from 1964 to 1972), *Charme*d (a fantasy drama series from 1998 to 2006), and *Sabrina the Teenaged Witch* (a sit-com series from 1996 to 2003). Movies using Salem's supernatural themes and connections include *The Undead* (1957), *The Witches of Salem* (1972), *Hocus Pocus (1993, 2022)*, and *Lords of Salem* (2012). Of course, while pop culture depictions of Salem have cemented its 'supernatural' credentials, Salem has embraced its troublesome past and otherworldly associations. While formal commemoration to those executed was unveiled in 2017 at Proctor's Ledge Memorial, Salem has evolved into a tourist destination where images and signs of the supernatural are ubiquitous. It is to this semiology and, specifically, the *Haunted Happenings* event, that we now turn to as foundation for Salem's supernatural placemaking.

Salem and Supernatural Semiotics: *Haunted Happenings* and signs of placemaking

Focusing on the physical development of *space*, rather than on the meaning of *place*, the origins of placemaking traces back to Jacobs (1961) and to America's post-World War II urbanist movement. Rooted in urban planning, design, and management, placemaking has come to encapsulate efforts made to enhance both the social and environmental capital of communities (Alexiou, 2011). To that end, events and contemporary placemaking have been used as a tool for policy promotion, urban regeneration, and co-creation of social and cultural

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programming within communities (Smith, 2016). The temporal and spatial significance of events, as charted by Richards (2015, 2017), coincides with the triadic relationship between the physical, imagined and lived space created within these 'eventful cities' and 'third spaces' (Soja, 1996). Indeed, eventful places promote competitive identity and help inward investment (Kavaratzis, 2004). Thus, with events at the forefront of current placemaking initiatives, an integrated approach has emerged wherein events have the capacity to shape physical space, strengthen social identity, enhance the lived experience of residents, and promote destination uniqueness through symbolic imagery and brand identity (Richards, 2017).

Moreover, placemaking influences a destination's cultural identity and a sense of place through tourism and the (mass) mobility of people (Urry, 2005). Of course, placemaking incorporates destination branding which utilises brand imaging and visual culture, a term rooted in the 1970's revival efforts of art history. This encompassed the way people visibly interpret tangible surroundings through senses and semiotics (Tuan, 1977; Rogoff, 2000; Jarratt, 2018). Indeed, Rogal (2012) supports visual culture and placemaking as a concept reflective of destination-specific cultural environments. These unique characterisations lend themselves to the formation of identity and culture, often commercialised through public art and performances, visitor attractions, architecture, and tourist souvenirs, in addition to collective lived experiences. In essence, the idea of tourism placemaking, inclusive of graphic logos, slogans and the visual representation of urban planning and heritage preservation, is reflective of a destination's ability to deliver a promised tourist experience (Carmen & Ciochina, 2014; Cresswell, 2008, 2015). Importantly, however, in terms of placemaking where tragedy has occurred, death has long been an article of trade (Stone and Grebenar, 2022). In turn, adding specific meaning to a *space* for it to become a meaningful *place* means that many dark tourism destinations are where the dead are remembered (or forgotten) by heritage production and experienced through tourist consumption.

However, within the broader visitor economy, temporal and spatial events are elemental in forming social identity and placemaking. When these dedicated events revolve around dark tourism and mortuary culture, we call upon the typology offered by Stewart and Stone (2022). The Dark Event Tourism taxonomical model (Figure 1) illustrates a range of different festival and events associated with fatality or the macabre (Stewart and Stone, 2022). Adopting a conceptual 'spectrum of darkness' (after Stone, 2006) and anchored by political, socio-cultural, economic, and technological parameters, the DET typology introduces Salem's annual

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Haunted Happenings event as a 'carnival of curation'. Notwithstanding semantics of dark vs. light dichotomies, *carnivals of curation* are positioned at the 'lightest' end of DET and defined as 'festivals or events exhibiting purposeful constructions and/or tangible symbolic representations of death and/or fear' (Stewart and Stone, 2022). *Haunted Happenings* also fits the dark tourism definition as consumption of the 'seemingly macabre' (Stone: 2006: 147).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Launched in Salem during October 1982 as a weekend-long, family-friendly Halloween event, *Haunted Happenings* has evolved into an internationally renowned Halloween festival (National Geographic, 2018). Halloween, a pagan festival cum Western Christian tradition observed on 31 October, is the period in the liturgical year that is dedicated to remembering the dead, including Saints, martyrs, and all the deceased. Therefore, each October, Salem's supernatural narrative is commoditised to be allied to Halloween, including haunted magic shows, chambers of terror and haunted house attractions, 'spiritual growth and worship workshops,' participatory trial re-enactments, witches' markets and emporiums, psychic fairs and Salem séances, celebrity psychics, heritage trails, witch balls and parties, as well as the Salem Witch Trial Memorial. Accounting for a considerable proportion of annual tourism to Salem, the *Haunted Happenings* event has positioned Salem as the 'Halloween Capital of the World' (Haunted Happenings, 2022).

Despite Salem's adoption of the witch as part of its metropolitan identity, the city's present-day depiction of a witch is hugely different from the controversial, mixed-gendered Puritanical ones of the late 17th century. Yet, the iconic depiction of a 'pointed-hat-wearing hag' is the familiar symbolic connection between witches – and Salem – and Halloween (Amin, 2019). Rooted in pagan, secular, and holy traditions, the Halloween industry is worth over $10 billion to the US economy (Tighe, 2021). Hence, as the global popularity of the witch and Halloween subculture grows, so does Salem's appeal as a 'mecca for the macabre' (Dann, 1998). Interestedly, pre-1982 Salem was only 'Witch City' by name and did not have the touristic infrastructure to support an onslaught of contemporary Halloween enthusiasts.

That said, however, Salem's commoditisation of the witch dates to the American Centennial in 1876 whereby the nation was satiated by the commoditisation of anything colonial, including witchcraft (Chevedden, 1997). Daniel Low & Co – a famous Salem retail

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store and landmark – first transmogrified the Witch Trials into manufactured commercial kitsch mementos from the late 1800s (for instance, brooch pins, spoons, and belt buckles). These initial products depicted an iconic (female) witch on a broomstick for touristic consumption. As touchstones of memory, the city has since adopted this imagery as symbolic of the community. Indeed, images of her spectral silhouette appears as the official insignia for *Haunted Happenings*, with both police and fire departments also displaying it, as well as being an emblem on the city's water tower and as mascot of the local high school. Crucially, the image of the witch and her associated witchery play a fundamental role in Salem's destination marketing and branding initiatives (Figure 2).

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

The omnipotence of the Salem Witch has been commodified through the manipulation of signs and symbols. The Salem Witch is now a kitsch and mass produced, almost juvenile and naïve, symbol of the underworld. In turn, semiotics of the Salem Witch and its associated destination branding renders the complex and contested nature of the original Witch Trials. Indeed, complexity of the difficult heritage that the Witch Trials provokes is manipulated and a conspicuous commodity culture prevails. Consequently, the Salem Witch offers the city an identity that promises economic prosperity in a highly competitive global visitor economy. Similarly, the Salem Witch is also an emotional marker of cultural trauma constructed for consumer recognition and (in)authentic association (Crouch, 2011). The purposeful use of witchcraft iconography by destination marketing authorities ensure that urban supernatural semiotics encourages dominant discourses about difficult heritage. Thus, witch imagery conjures culturally significant thoughts and emotions to Salem's portrayed identity and social milieu, shaping both the city's semiotic landscape and its interpretation of its esoteric past. Yet, as commemoration is often obscured by commercialisation (Stone *et al.*, 2018), the festivalisation of Salem's supernatural narrative is commodified through a culmination of event-specific offerings under the *Haunted Happenings* umbrella. Indeed, the festival is testament to a cultural desire to engage with the problematic past in creative ways. Some may recognise and welcome the opportunity for accentuated dividends by satiating the 'witchcraft Disneyland' expectations of dark event tourism. Conversely, others may wish to use *Haunted Happenings* to educate about modern witchery (including Wicca), or even 'decry pervasive

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witchcraft imagery as indecorous' (Olbrys Gencarella, 2007, p. 271). Nevertheless, *Haunted Happenings* as a festival provides an opportunity for 'mediated resistance,' a strategy involving tolerance of the anti/pro-tourism dichotomy, with the goal of preserving Salem's cultural trauma, social identity, as well as collective memory (Joseph & Kavoori, 2001).

The 'Haunting' of Salem: Cultural Trauma & Collective Memory

Recent studies have explored difficult heritage of places and people within identity formation and cultural trauma (for instance see Lee, 2019; Sharpley, 2020; and Sontum, 2019). In the case of Salem, visitors absorb experiential and educational messages throughout *Haunted Happenings* dark event tourism experiences. Embedded in a sense 'Otherness,' these supernatural-based messages encourage formation of collective memory, helping to sculpt the visual landscape and the 'spirit of place' of Salem. In other words, a phenomenon of locality and defining element of place identity evaluates humanist and psychoanalytical responses to the mystery and experience of 'place' (Garnham, 1985). This spirit of place also highlights treasured facets of a space that are of emotional significance to residents and consumed by tourists which, in turn, helps promote a greater sense of 'communitas' (Getz and Page, 2016).

Festivals, such as Salem's *Haunted Happenings*, are also designed to enhance community pride, by establishing a spirit of place and helping preserve cultural heritage (Derrett, 2003). Therefore, the social function of a festival often mimics fundamental community values including social identity and historical preservation. Indeed, de Bres and Davis (2001) suggest that in addition to reflecting place identity and communitas - that is, allowing individuals a common experience and liminality together – festivals are a platform used to challenge existing place identities. Importantly, discord can exist amongst community stakeholders if only certain factions of the community view the festival as integral to identity formation (Frost *et al*., 2009). A community's economic dependency on a festival may result in the festival (re)presenting a packaged version of itself, manufactured to appeal to potential visitors (Clarke and Jepson, 2011). At times, this contrived product can fail to resonate with certain residents. However, due to exposure, resident perceptions of a festival can shift for two reasons. Firstly, they begin to identify with the version of place being promoted and, secondly, they recognise the economic value of the festival to the community (Fountain and Mackay, 2017).

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Although Salem defining its identity has a complicated history, witchcraft undeniably dominates its cultural landscape. The *Haunted Happenings* events are the medium used to convey this. Its inclusion of sensory and emotional engagement, unconscious assimilation of cultural trauma, and kitschification of Salem's difficult heritage is the currency of the city's collective memory. Influenced by seminal work from Halbwach (1950) on remembrance as a product defined by social frameworks, Rigney (2018) models' collective memory as a malleable by-product of the shared socio-cultural efforts of storytelling. Therefore, narrative interplay of semiotics, linguistics and spatial-temporal markers posit *Haunted Happenings* as a space of 'Otherness' (Wydra, 2018). In other words, the 'Other' symbolise bygone 'witches' setting apart Salem's past cultural trauma and urban supernatural in placemaking terms. It is this sense of the 'Other' that highlights dichotomic symbiosis of generational memory, as both an inference to the past as well as a framework for the future. Of course, the challenge with Salem's collective memory is that it has been influenced by four centuries of highly publicised scrutiny and condemnation and, subsequently, monetised for mercantile advantage. This reflects its utopic transformation of (in)authenticity where Tercentenary memorials, political monuments, costumed characters, staged historical homes of literary significance, wand shops, or trial re-enactments occupy the same space and are commoditised for the tourist gaze. While examining the social dynamics of such commodification are beyond the scope of this paper, such festivalisation characterises Salem's distinctiveness and 'ethos of place.' It also emphasises individual interpretations of past experiences and how they relate to the present, particularly in terms of social identity and placemaking (Simone-Charteris *et al.,* 2016).

Historically, events are integral to developing community driven placemaking and social identity because of their ability to facilitate economic growth, preserve cultural heritage and support social networking (Sofield *et al.*, 2017; McClinchey, 2008). Initially proposed by Tajfel *et al.*, (1979), social identity theory (SIT) is a social psychological framework explaining how individuals interact socially and cognitively within group settings (Liu and László, 2007). In short, the formation of one's social identity is the product of how one categorizes, compares, and identifies themselves against their social milieu according to perceived commonalities. Indeed, formation of these Self/Other identities is based upon a matrix of contributory factors, including individual social, political, educational, and economic perceptions in a dichotomic 'us' ('in-group') vs. 'them' ('out-group') mentality (Chiang *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, these groups become paramount to the creation of the Self and intolerant attitudes towards the Other

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(Hogg *et al*., 2004). Salem's social identity is dominated by the historical fear of its 'out-group' (that is, *witches*), whereby its present social landscape is one where the concocted *witch* and *her* urban supernatural associations thrive and prosper (The Girl Museum, 2022). Hence, the cultural landscape of the Salem Witch is representative not only of the city's 'in-groups,' but also the embodiment of the triadic relationship between place, meaning, and identity. Importantly, however, the critical examination of *Haunted Happenings* through the lens of social identity, collective memory, placemaking and supernatural semiology, permit a greater understanding of Salem as (an)Other place. It is here, as way of summary, that we draw upon Foucault's notion of heterotopology.

Making Places: Salem as Other and 'Otherworldly'

Although contested, the concept of 'place' arrives at the intersection of human emotion and physical landscape wherein lies the attachment of meaning to space. One school of thought has approached 'place' as objective, definitive locations embedded with meaning (Tuan, 1977, Agnew, 1987), while a more humanist approach contends 'place' as the subjective interaction of individuals to an infinite realm of spaces (Relph, 1976). Integral to this approach is the notion of experience and how we relate to our surroundings. In response to post-Marxist radicalization, a third ideology emerged which argued for consideration of the role power plays in the establishment of 'meaning' to 'place,' suggesting 'place' as a social construct created and defined by those with enough influence to do so (Harvey, 1989; Keith and Pile, 1993). This is exemplified by the places in which people live today — such as Salem – where societal values are reflected and/or mediated by those who produce them, and the place narrative is tailored for inward investment and economic gain.

Yet, the molding of 'place' can sometimes be used as a tool for exclusion of undesirable communities. An expression of this segregation is exemplified by the 17th century Puritan extermination of Salem's 'witch community'. Ironically, despite past State-sponsored killing of so-called witches, Salem today is home to one of the largest factions of modern witches in America. Therefore, after extensive exploration on the challenges associated with exclusionary places (Sibley, 1995), Massey (2004) proposed a 'global' or 'progressive' approach to 'place' that exemplified its transience. It highlighted the anomaly of 'place' as the fluid byproduct of people, beliefs, ideologies and/or symbolic meanings that continually pass through them. However, with the homogeneity of place on the rise, communities must consider how best to

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resuscitate the visceral essence of place and reestablish themselves as unique and noteworthy spaces (Cook, 2008; Cresswell, 2008).

Applying geodesic coordinates to Salem (that is, Latitude 42° 31' 10" N, Longitude 70° 53' 48" W), means that Salem is both a geographical space *and* meaningful place. It includes a physical landscape in an historic coastal area (buildings, transportation infrastructure, cultural attractions) and a noteworthy 'sense of place,' intrinsically linked to its slavery-heritage, colonialism, and working-class population, as well as its rich maritime history. However, amidst Salem's prominent witchcraft and supernatural branding and allegiance to Halloween, little of this is evident. Therefore, the prominence of *Haunted Happenings* as a narrator of Salem's problematic past with the otherworldly and cementing it as place of Otherness suggests Salem is a *heterotopia* – meaning 'Other Place' (after Foucault [1967] 1984). It is here that Foucault argues heterotopias – as opposed to 'utopias' as invented spaces – are real places where boundaries of normalcy are transgressed (Stone, 2013). Indeed, heterotopias may be defined as real places, but which are perceived to stand outside of known space and, in so doing, creates a sense of the alternative (Stone, 2013). Moreover, the notion of a heterotopia can

> ...inject a sense of alterity into the sameness, and where change enters the familiar and difference is inserted into the commonplace. Indeed, heterotopias are spaces of contradiction and duality, as well as places of physical representation and imagined meaning... Heterotopias can be physical or mental spaces that act as 'Other places' alongside existing spaces. These include places where norms of conduct are suspended either through a sense of crisis or through deviation of behaviour. Heterotopias also have a precise and determined function and are reflective of the society in which they exist. They also have the power to juxtapose several real spaces simultaneously as well as being linked to the accumulative or transitory nature of time. Heterotopias are also places that not freely accessible as well as being spaces of illusion and compensation. In short, Foucault argued that we are now in an era of simultaneity, juxtaposition, of proximity and distance, of side-by-side, and of the dispersed. (Stone, 2013, p. 80)

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Salem as a heterotopia suggests its historic cultural trauma has been assimilated and possesses collective memory but an imagined social identity. Therefore, Salem is a place of the familiar but also of difference. However, the contradiction yet duality of supernatural semiology means 'reality' has been suspended, particularly during the *Haunted Happenings* period. Indeed, deviation of the occult, however trivialized, is permitted through consumerism (also see Hill, 2011). In turn, Salem as a heterotopia offers a determined function of dark event tourism, only accessible to the consumer and subsequent tourist gaze. Yet, Salem through its *Haunted Happenings* is reflective of its difficult heritage and its witchery past and persecution. While the nature of the *Haunted Happening* events in Salem juxtaposes realities of social and cultural progress, they are nevertheless illusionary and compensatory at the same time. Indeed, the perceived 'Otherness' and transcendent abilities of the festival co-exists alongside its cultural counterpart: that is, the city of Salem. To that end, Salem can be both *Haunted Happenings* and a vibrant Northshore community. Both are viewed through the tourist gaze as touristic commodities on the altar of cultural consumption, urging the sanctification of their enigmatical existence. Indeed, *Haunted Happenings* exists as a spatial-temporal place for the ritualistic celebration of Halloween and raucous indulgence of America's favourite holiday. Importantly, however, Salem as a heterotopia is also a monument to the lasting effects of religious intolerance, political hegemony, and social dissidence.

Conclusion

Salem is a destination of difficult heritage where semiology of witchcraft has been embraced into its social identity. As Figure 3 offers a schematic summary, the cultural trauma of Salem's supernatural past has been transformed through semiotics that, in turn, has provided a morphosis of the witch. The placemaking of Salem has embedded the urban supernatural with dark tourism kitschification and, more specifically, dark event tourism. Indeed, the *Haunted Happenings* event, through its ephemeral Halloween consumption, allows Salem's collective memory to be rendered into something that is politically acceptable, culturally nuanced, and socially sanctioned. However, complexities and misdeeds of the problematic past – that is, the original Salem Witch trials and Puritanism – is depicted through the tourist gaze where difficult heritage has become a cultural commodity.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

Salem's history of witchcraft and cultural offerings have become a desirable focus of dark tourism and prompts the emergence of restructured authenticity of the host community through urban placemaking and supernatural storytelling. Yet, Salem is also an-Other place – a heterotopia – where contradictory spaces of extraordinary supernatural exists alongside ordinary places. It is also a place of collective memory that has been made to both capture and suspend its cultural trauma. Moreover, Salem has a function to export its tragic history through touristic consumption and festivalisation where, subsequently, is reflective of the society in which we exist. Consequently, Salem is a surreal place to juxtapose our witchery nightmares, including the persecuted and prosecutors, which are both real and imagined. The illusionary and compensatory nature of Salem's placemaking means that we gaze upon social bigotry as a cultural product in which the familiar and uncanny collide. Ultimately, Salem reflects the reality of our contemporary globalised community, where it is a world within a world, mirroring and yet upsetting what is outside.

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