

TRUTH, JUSTICE AND THE AMERICAN WAY: STRUCTURE, NARRATIVE
AND NATION IN TOURIST PERFORMANCES IN SALEM, MA

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Dedicated to Sarah Osbourne, Roger Toothaker, Ann Foster, Lydia Dustin and the unnamed daughter of Sarah Good, for whom there were no trials.

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Looking at six performances (including tourist ‘museums’ and walking tours) for the October influx of tourists to Salem, Massachusetts, this work outlines the way each performance encodes within a structural perspective on the nature of the Salem Witch Hysteria through the selective inclusion, exclusion and parallelizing of various events and characters. These perspectives are analyzed for their broader insight into narratives of national character, examining the way in which national character can be examined not as an objective force influencing production of narratives but as a form of discursive repetition, creating national character through repeated acts of unifying narrative. Also explored are the genealogical roots of these narratives, both in popular media about the witch trials and in historical explorations of the period. The fundamental argument at the heart of the work is that historical narratives are produced by creating a meta-narrative that produces a spectral American character, existing in the minds of the observers but not in any objective way.

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Introduction

Bridget Bishop's fate lies in the hands of the Salem mob. Two hours earlier she was arrested by Constable Herrick and dragged manacled through the street, struggling in her torn red bodice, followed by a growing group of people. Now, in the town hall, the court of Oyer and Terminer sits in judgment, with the mob that followed Bishop weighing the testimony of Bishop's neighbors and former workers, of respected Harvard ministers, untrustworthy Quakers and confessed witches, trying to decide if she will be tried as a witch and ultimately executed or released from all charges. As they weigh the matter, John Hathorne, magistrate of the Salem Court stands to speak to the hastily assembled grand jury, his stentorian tone reinforcing the seriousness of the charges.

“We must now take a counting of the assembly to determine whether or not to hold Bridget Bishop for trial. Please bear in mind that a vote to commit her for trial is not a vote to convict her of witchcraft. Based only on the testimonies which you in this room on this day, those who feel that Bridget Bishop should be held for a formal trial on this charge, manifest it by a sign of lifting up your hands.”

A portion of the assembled raises their hands, some furtively looking around to see what those near them do before choosing their position, bowing to the community pressure to hold her for trial. Hathorne examines the shown hands of the grand jury and makes note of their sentiments before speaking again.

“Thank you. Again based only on the testimonies presented here today, those who feel that there is no evidence to warrant that Bridget Bishop be formally tried on this charge, signify so by a show of hands.”

Again, a portion of the assembled raises their hands, again they are counted and a growing murmur spreads through the courtroom. Magistrate Hathorne and Constable Herrick speak briefly before Hathorne bangs his staff on the floor for order and addresses the assembly.

“Hear now our recommendation. The magistrates and citizens of our sovereign Lord and Lady the King and Queen, on this 19th day of April, 1692, do consider that there is sufficient evidence to show that Bridget Bishop may have exercised and practiced witchcraft upon the bodies of Mercy Lewis and others. She will be committed to Salem Jail until her trial.”

Active chatter springs up around the courtroom as Bishop is dragged away by Constable Herrick, screaming in anger at Judge Hathorne and the court “God will give you blood to drink!” As her screams and curses fade away, a solemn silence falls on the room before the assembled jury begins to applaud as Bishop returns to the courtroom and takes a bow with Hathorne and her accusers.

What is this strange display? Every year in Salem, Massachusetts, tourists are treated to performances like this, playful encapsulations of a tragic period in Americas past. In them, history is turned into invective narratives, into scary displays, into judicial dramas. These public performances of history turn histories

into stories, not just narratives of events, but plots with protagonists and antagonists, twists and revelations and most importantly, morals about the time before America. These narratives have lessons to teach, the end result of the process of turning history into story. By looking at these lessons and the way in which people interact with them, we can see how the folkloric (re)telling of historical events shows a national story from which emerges an image of national character, a way of looking at the narratives of the past to understand the perspective on the present.

In many ways, none of these perspectives are new. Folklore was born in the natal age of nationalism, as Europe struggled to understand what made culture. Johann Gottfried von Herder suggested in the late 18th century when he coined the term *Volkslied*[Song of the Folk or Folksong] that “The soul of a people was articulated in that people’s folksongs (Dundes, International Folkloristics 1999, 2)” In his pioneering collection *Folksongs: The Voice of the Nations in Songs*, Herder articulated the voice of an age. According to Herder, by examining the folksongs of the German people, survivals from an earlier, purer time period, the scholar could glean the true identity of the German people. For Herder, who would later alienate many philosophical companions with his support for the French Revolution, folksongs were the voice of the common people, a way of accessing the *Volksgeist*, the essential spirit of the people.

To Herder and others in the early days of folklore, folklore was a dimension of national identity. The concepts of *Zeitgeist* and *Volksgeist* were conceptual

frameworks for the examination of the identities of large groups of people, nations and ethnicities¹ in their totality. These conceptual frameworks were seen as literal manifestations of the essence or spirit of the people. When Jacob Grimm writes,

Our fatherland still abounds everywhere with this treasure that our forefathers have transmitted to us. Despite all the ridicule and derision with which it has been treated, it has survived in secret, unconscious of its own beauty, and carrying its irrepressible essence alone within itself. Without researching it in detail, neither our poetry nor our history nor our language can be fully understood with respect to their ancient and true origins. (Grimm 1999[1815], 5-6)

He is speaking of the basic identity of the German People, the *Volk*, as a manifestation of their years of history that is revealed through folklore. In this irrepressible essence, Grimm sees national identity in folklore.

The collection of folklore as a search for national origin continued as part of the Romantic Movement and the search for a traditional identity in response to the increased urbanization and homogenization of culture. The founding of the discipline of folklore itself has its roots in an attempt to preserve the history of the people. This was a way of preserving the traditions of the people in a way that made identity comprehensible. Wilhelm Mannhardt expresses this sentiment well in his article “Demande” from 1864. “It is the last moment to gather these valuable scientific materials[traditions, folktales, customs, beliefs]; they are disappearing every day in the face of increasing civilization, and it is only our generation which

¹ This latter word would seem quite out of place in 18th and 19th century German philosophy, with their fondness for Germanic terms over Greco-Roman ones. Still, it describes well in the modern context the idea that had begun to germinate here.

will be able to save for our posterity the last remnants of the customs of our ancestors before they disappear completely. (Mannhardt 1999[1864], 19) Thus the collection of folklore is an attempt by the folklorist to assure the continued knowledge of identity for the people of the nation.

This theme did not leave the discipline with the death of Romanticism. Richard Dorson picked up this theme in his book *America in Legend* seeking national consciousness in America ultimately in a series of historical impulses. In some ways, Dorson's mission was an updating of Herder's for the 20th century.

It is the thesis of this book that the vital folklore and especially the legends of a given period in American history reflect the main concerns and values, tensions and anxieties, goals and drives of the period. We may well find in the folk legends a statement of the common man's outlook denied us in conventional documents. The pulsating folklore that mirrors the philosophy of one period becomes the ossified "superstition" of a later period. (R. Dorson, *America in Legend* 1973, xiv)

Within the volume, Dorson goes on to consolidate these themes into a series of historical impulses, multi-genre patterns that went throughout national folklore and gave a sense of the key life-style of the age. For Dorson, national identity could be seen writ large in the folklore of the people, showing the ways in which the concerns of an age emerged in their legends. One pertinent example is Dorson's examination of contemporary attitudes surrounding Cotton Mather's involvement in Salem, exemplifying the image of the Religious Man, hero of his age and example of the Puritan worldview.

But ideas of national identity have taken many hits in the academy. The idea that a national folklore reflects a national character has become a relic of the intellectual past, left in the dustbin alongside theories of criminal phrenology and geocentric astronomy. But have we been too hasty? America is a concept up for grabs, a grand narrative that is still referenced again and again. References to the 'Puritan work ethic', the 'founding fathers' and the 'American dream' still emerge in rhetoric in American media. Can we pick folklore and nation up from the dustbin, cut off the parts that have spoiled and try to save the rest?

Salem gives us an opportunity. Salem is a locus of historical debate taking place in multiple dimensions. Professional historians clash over the agricultural practices that may have led to a hallucinogenic outbreak. Hollywood movies tell stories of secret conspiracies and white witches. Religious groups come to Salem to preach danger and tolerance. And performances occur throughout Salem every October that draw thousands who come to consume history, who choose to go beyond the written and seek out the history in story form. Looking at the opening example, the condemnation of Bridget Bishop by an audience of paying tourists, an image of historical discourse tied to consumption appears, people paying to pass historical judgment, a historical judgment that echoes through the centuries.

It is these stories that I want to study, made using multiple methods but a singular aim; to turn the events of 1692 into a narrative, a digestible story. This process turns people into protagonists, events into plots and consequences into morals. To do so, I will bring up the concept of thematic folklore, focused not on

formal categorization but on internal similarities in subject matter. This examination of history through thematic folklore makes comprehensible the sense of America in narrative. With it, we can start to reexamine the relationship between nation and folklore, but with a sense of subjectivity and discourse that drives us forward.

This quest is not new. Much of the work of public history, museum studies and heritage scholarship has been devoted to the way in which materials are developed into unified narratives of history and identity. However, Salem's heavily negotiated past, one that is used as a parable for justice, tolerance and the meaning of community gives us a chance to talk about what audiences think of America based on the granting of wishes by witches, the telling of ghost stories outside the most haunted house in Salem, and the decision of a mob to convict Bridget Bishop. Seeing the performance of history for consumption, we see the way in which American history is a product of the marketplace as well as the academy.

Chapter 1-What is the Witch Hysteria?

History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past.

-Johann Huizinga

In the streets of Salem, only a few blocks from the church, a knot of people surround a supposed conjurer. He looks nervous standing there, his clothing flashy for the standards of the time. His actions have drawn them in and his actions now will affect how they judge him, their approval means his continued livelihood, while their censure could be catastrophic. As the crowd watches, he puts forth his hand and reveals a small object. "Is this your card?" he asks the woman before him. As she nods, the crowd applauds and as he passes his hat around, they fill it with money.

To ask the question "What is the Salem Witch Hysteria?" is to be bombarded by narratives. Narratives of medical historians, revolutionary dramatists and religious devotees compete with those of professional pagans, animatronic Puritans and sitcom witches. The story is told in dozens of forms, by hundreds of people, in so many ways that it is hard to unify the narratives into a single story. Salem's history is the locus of a great historical debate, most of which takes place on the streets of the town itself.

But this historical debate, carried out every October in the museums, on the streets, and even at the Halloween parties of Salem, is about more than just the

lives of some hysterical Puritans. The narrative context of Salem serves as stand-in, a mythic representation of the U.S. system of justice and the complex questions of innocence and guilt, society and individuality and belief and practice at the heart of narratives of American character. The battle for Salem's narrative past is the battle for America's future, an argument of historical trajectory and danger, a myth foretelling the realities of American life, and importantly, available for tourist consumption.

In some ways, these performances in Salem provide us with a pair of linked questions. First, how do we explain the Salem narrative performances? Second, what do the Salem narrative performances explain? Interestingly, the answer to both lies in the conception of mythic history as consumer discourse.

The concept of American history as American myth is nothing new, but Salem provides special insight into the discursive folkloric process at the heart of such a myth. Looking at the active performance of mythic texts in Salem re-opens a discussion often considered closed. Can one look at American history, folklore and literature and learn what it means to be American? While this question has fallen out of favor with academics, the question is still negotiated in the world at large. As the chattering classes continue to debate the notion of American identity, a new model is necessary to study such a debate. Each narrative performance on Salem history is a structural myth, describing a world beyond the Puritans that encompasses America from then to now and encodes material on the cultural and historical distinctiveness of the United States. By looking at these presentations,

we can see how an overarching narrative of American character is rhetorically encoded within each performance, creating American identity within the narrative, framing it in a larger meta-narrative of American culture and providing elements that fit within a discursive national identity created as much by the performers as by the audience.

Such an answer to the question of American identity is heavy. While it cannot solely stand under its own weight, like a cathedral, it can be buttressed. I offer as buttresses to support this weight a theoretical perspective on the performance of history as folklore, an academic context into which this question and answer fit and a rich description of both the general historical and fictional milieu of Salem and of six exemplary performances that provide information on how history is negotiated during Salem's October performances. These buttresses are broken up into several chapters to provide coherence to the ideas presented within and sequence to the argument as made.

The first step in supporting this argument is to present an overview of the situation. In the second chapter, I offer a general presentation on the situation in Salem and a discussion of how a line may be drawn around the relevant performances that allows their discussion in a folkloric context. To do this, I present a revised concept of folkloric genre, based around the concept of critical questions and exemplified by the genre *historia*, the term I use for the discursive, allegorical texts performed within the localized context of Salem. This method

builds on historic folklore scholarship based on a thematic approach to texts, reviving the general concept to examine the multiplicity of Salem performances.

With this tool of examination, I outline the academic context of a number of these characteristics. The third chapter takes the first step, examining ways in which academic discussions of history and tradition have revised the concept of historical discourse in the recent past to inform the nature of the Salem *historia*. Following these deconstructions of objective history and objective tradition, I discuss the examination of acts of historical discourse using concepts drawn from identity studies as a way of comprehending the relationship between performance and historical reality. Finally, I present the controversial nature of the historical discourse on Salem itself, examining the ways in which theoretical historical discourse often draws on multiple sources and explanations in the construction of an event.

The second characteristic of the *historia* is examined in chapter four, involving the discussion of conceptions of performance in folklore and the way in which *historia* can be linked to historical conceptions of folkloric performance as culturally embedded, strategically deployed and structural in both composition and output. In this chapter, I describe the ways in which folkloristics has historically supported the examination of performance as reflective of internal conceptions of identity as a way of understanding the way in which *historia* can be seen as productive of cultural knowledge.

To support my assertion of allegorical characteristics for the *historia*, I turn to conceptions of nation and national identity. The fifth chapter begins with the discussion of academic concepts of national identity in American Studies and folklore, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of such arguments, before turning to a generalized deconstruction of the concept of nation in an effort to explore the ways in which national identity is formed. This argument is then brought into the larger performative framework laid out in chapter three, outlining the way in which *historia* can approach national character as an object of study without objective reification through the understanding of identity as discursive.

Finally, as a foundation onto which to erect this building, the sixth chapter takes to the field and examines in greater depth the narrative reality of Salem, examining the context and meaning of these texts to explore their results and reasonings. First, I examine the fictional context that has emerged around Salem, exploring the wealth of fictional material on the trials varying from the well known to the obscure, from the deeply historical to the broadly satirical and from the mundane to the uncanny. These stories create an imaginary Salem that exists in the minds of visitors. Second, I return to the description of October in Salem, describing in greater depth the amount of historical narrative present in the town and posing the critical similarities and differences present in various *historia*. Based on these contextual materials, I go into greater depth on three contrasting sets of Salem *historia*.

The first set is the examination of two indoor presentations calling themselves ‘museums’, the Salem Witch Museum and the Witch History Museum. These two are not devoted primarily to the collection and preservation of historical objects or on the thematic presentation of cultural information, but on the use of fictional dioramas to dramatize the events of the trials. While both use a combination of animatronics and tour guide performances and both construct models of a Puritan tragedy of justice and hysteria, they take different approaches to the problem and show at the outset some of the disagreements present within Salem.

The second set of performances involves two walking tours. In Hocus Pocus tours, narratives of a greedy sheriff are woven into the evolution of a booming then declining seaport with haunted photographs and tourist exploitation. In the Salem Historical Tours, an exploitative economic relationship between three towns turns into a bloody and destructive rumor mill. The tours use oral narratives and historical landmarks to detail the story of Salem’s tragic past while interacting with the dynamic landscape of the town.

Thirdly, I examine two cultural performances on justice and tolerance with interesting links to Salem. In Cry Innocent, the trial of Bridget Bishop is held up as a model of the ways in which society and justice function through individual prejudices and disputes. In Inside the Witching Hour, a Wiccan Spellcasting ties the trials to centuries of intolerance and uses the context to call for a broad increase in tolerance.

Finally, after all these presentations, I reexamine the questions raised and try to outline what we can learn from the example of Salem *historia*, how the narratives from Salem serve as discursive myths of American identity and justice. In short, Salem presents a model of interaction with history based on the consumer performance of historical tourism. Looking at the ways in which this relates to American conceptions of national identity, the final chapter examines how the process of consuming national narratives complicates aspects of the philosophy of history, exploring the ways in which people connect with the larger narratives of the nation.

Altogether, the hope of this work is to re-open discussion of the way in which people 'do' American identity. Because while the academy has stopped talking about what it means to be American, the world around has not and leaving such material unexamined is ignoring a wealth of potential cultural understanding about how America works as a series of national metaphors, and how people come to understand national identity.

Chapter 2-Salem and the *Historia*

While Salem's connections to the word witch may never disappear, Halloween is a time when the various entities from cultural to religious to civic make peace with the term. From the green-faced witches of the Land of Oz to contemporary interpretations, the term can invoke much thinking and break up many myths.

-Salem Haunted Happenings Media Kit 2008

Up and down Essex Street, the canny observer will note the recurrence of a foul beast, pig-nosed and dressed in furs, often juggling a 'devil stick' between two other sticks and inviting pedestrians to come to the mall and enter his haunted house. The foul beast claims—at different intervals—to be a witches familiar, a demon, and something referred to as an 'ork'. While the creature has appeared in the midst of large crowds, no reports of violence or panic have been associated with its appearances, and many people of the town have been known to follow his advice and enter this haunted house.

Salem is a small town of 40,407² people northeast of Boston, Massachusetts at the mouth of the Naumkeag River. One of the earliest settlements of Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay colony, by 1692, Salem was one of the primary towns of the area, with its busy seaport rivaling Boston for business. For about a year in 1692, the largest series of witch trials in the Western Hemisphere occurred throughout Essex County, encompassing Salem, Beverly, Danvers and Peabody as well as other surrounding communities as far away as Wells, Maine. Nineteen people were executed by the government, five people died in jail, one man was tortured to death

² According to 2000 Census

and hundreds were jailed on suspicion of witchcraft. The trials came to an end with a final round of executions in September of 1692, though some people lingered longer in jail if they could not pay the exorbitant fees to secure their release.

In the aftermath of this event, known to history as the Salem Witch Trials or the Salem Witch Hysteria³, Salem tried to forget its sordid past. Danvers, previously known as Salem Village, changed its name. Peabody, previously known as Salem Farms, changed its name. Trial notes were misplaced, families changed their names, and some say that the hill on which the convicted witches were hanged was carted away, all to escape the legacy of 1692.

But years afterwards, Salem continued to return to the American consciousness. Tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Upton and Arthur Miller kept the trials simmering in American minds, even as the geography of Salem changed. When the sitcom *Bewitched*, a series focused on the comedic tribulations of a marriage between a witch and a mortal man, suffered a devastating studio fire and found itself without its usual sets, the producers brought the series to the small town, filming a set of episodes on location at a fictional witch's convention in Salem. Tourists began to come to Salem to see the city. What started with a trickle of tourists swelled to a river and a new Salem was born.

Now, visitors come to Salem by the bus from around the world. The Salem Essex visitor's center provides guides in a half-dozen languages and the streets of Salem are alive with chatter in Korean, Japanese, Italian and many other

³ I use this term for the 1692 event throughout because it encompasses the larger event. To focus on the trials ignores the suffering of those who never received a trial and those who died in jail.

languages. In no month do tourists come in greater numbers than in October. Throughout Salem in October, tourists brave the often chilly New England autumn to wander the streets, filling the main pedestrian thoroughfare, Essex street, shoulder to shoulder with cartoon ninja, women in Puritan costumes made at home using fabrics covered in fire patterns, grisly murder victims with false knives sticking from their temples and young women with crushed velvet cloaks and shirts bearing slogans like “Never again the burning times”, “Born again Pagan” and “good girls go to heaven...bad girls go to Salem”.

As the tourists come in October—itself interesting because none of the events significant to the trials themselves happened in October—they are surrounded by narratives. Museums offer “award winning live re-enactment of witch trials”, signs summon people to “Salem’s Official Ghostly Tour” and stores invite pedestrians to “Salem’s First Witch Shop”. Throughout the town, from many sources, are claims of narrative authority, people’s positions on the events of 300 years ago that vary wildly not only on the details of the events but on the lessons to be learned and the importance of Salem as a historical touchstone.

This variability is best illustrated by two examples, wildly divergent in form and rhetoric. At the Witches Ball—a popular ticketed costume party thrown for Neo-Pagans at the Hawthorne hotel—a massive tableau of decorations includes a balloon pentacle on the ceiling and a large tree made of balloons with branches stretching out, including one featuring a balloon noose. Standing before this tableau, a solemn invocation by a local priestess marks the official beginning of the

celebration. As the woman stands before the gathered guests—some sipping drinks from the cash bar, some seated at tables with friends, all in costumes of various levels of complexity—she waxes eloquent on the tragedies of Salem’s past, linking it to the broader phenomenon of European witch persecution and exhorting the gathered crowd to never again allow what happened to their fellows here.

Merely one block away, in front of the Peabody-Essex museum, three people stand. One of them holds high a sign that says “Jesus Saves”, a second speaks into a megaphone, proclaiming the study of the witch trials a waste of time, a third hands out photocopies of a piece of Xeroxlore, warning the public of the dangers of witchcraft symbols and the perils of ignorance. These performers treat Salem’s visitors as people walking into danger, placing themselves at risk by coming here. Together, they warn of eternal damnation for those who take too lightly the threats of Satanism and witchcraft, deride those who study the history as wasting their time and preach to those who celebrate Halloween on the streets of Salem, a cursed city.

These two examples sit on opposite ends of a large bell curve of Salem historical narratives. One is a carnivalesque religious invocation that reaches back to invoke ideas of a pre-Christian universal earth mother to warn of the dangers of intolerance and persecution. One is a modern technological product that warns of the dangers of witches and demons using religious language born during the Great Awakening. What both of them do, along with dozens of other narratives performed

in various forms, is use the history of the location to make a specific point about the nature of the present, crafting their own morals from the parable of the hysteria.

Throughout Salem, every October, dozens of simultaneous narratives are performed, using specific methods and forms to perform a specific version of the events of 1692 for specific reasons. These narratives are performed as oral narratives, museum displays, historical markers, podcasts, street sermons, magical rituals, séances, novelty clothing, Xeroxes, parties and improvisational theater, to name only a few examples. Everywhere in Salem, the story is the same: we have a lesson to learn from 1692 and one can only trust us to tell it (for a reasonable price). At the same time, audiences attend multiple performances, sampling history from the immense buffet. As they see, hear and feel these multiple narratives, they immerse themselves in discourse, buying access to historical reasoning.

To complicate matters, this wide variability of form makes the comparative study difficult by conventional folkloric standards. Different versions fall into very different categories of folklore and could be very easily considered legends, rituals, material culture, folk religion, Xeroxlore and a host of other genres. But while they vary in form, they have far more in common with each other than they do with other representations of their genre and taken together can provide great insight into the importance of historic performances in the American consciousness. To accommodate these differences without presenting a prohibitively huge volume of material on each individual genre, I instead propose to use a thematic perspective

on genre, which allows us to draw a circle around these works in consideration of their similarities and allow for detailed comparative study.

The Critical Examination of Genre

In examining the methodology of genre, two questions emerge. First, what is a genre? Second, why is a genre? The first question can, to some degree be answered simply: a genre is a set of texts grouped together based on similarity of form and/or content. But answering the second requires a critical addressing of the very concept, because genres are not found, they're made. The principle behind the creation of such generic categories being that the study of similar texts provides a rich source of material.

However, this principle is not always carried out logically in the history of folklore. The genres we carry with us are too frequently based on theoretical ur-forms, each of which are a set of oft-orthogonal characteristics from which an individual text deviates. For instance, the legend is defined primarily based on its relationship to perceptions of reality, while the ballad is defined by its form and its national origin. While this can be a boon to the collector, allowing one to focus their efforts and simplify classification, it makes things difficult for contextual study. The comparison of two texts of different genres requires not simply the enumeration of the similarities and differences between the texts themselves but additionally between their respective genres, as well as a consideration of the relationship between text A and genre A and text B and genre B. These splits of genre can ignore the interrelationship of the respective texts themselves, treating

two texts that exist in dialogue with each other as residents of two static unrelated categories, metaphorical Montagues and Capulets that must consent to the comparison despite years of differentiation. If the purpose is to allow the comparative study of multiple works that exist together in context, the static Ur-form box method of genre shows distinct limitations.

To enable deeper study of folklore in context, we need a reconsideration of genre based on the breadth of contextual considerations, a way of understanding the similarities of texts that is more open-ended and customizable. While this method has a history in folkloric work, especially of the Eighteenth century, folkloristics has turned extensively to genre-based studies, turning away from information available in theme based study. To revive this model with due attention to the present state of the academy, I propose the adaptation of a method of genre proposed by media studies scholar Jason Mittel. Mittel's proposal emerges from the post-structural deconstruction of essential categories to question the nature of genre categories. "One of the great lessons of poststructuralism is to question the categories that seem to be natural and assumed. Genre definitions are no more natural than the texts that they seem to categorize. Genres are cultural products, constituted by media practices and subject to ongoing change and redefinition. (Mittel 2004, 1)"

Mittel's work primarily addressed the application of genres from film studies to the study of television, arguing that the differences in market, scheduling and method made the use of genres from film at best incomplete and at worst

prescriptively limiting of variation. The core argument of his text focused on genre as discourse, the emergence of performance practices from practice rather than category. “To examine generic discourses, the site of genre analysis must shift from isolated texts precategorized by their genre to culturally circulating generic practices that categorize texts. (Mittel 2004, 13)” To Mittel, the use of the preconceived notions of genre existing in film studies was the same static-box problem, the foregrounding of specific differences or similarities to the neglect of organic cultural practices.

Our goal in analyzing generic discourses is not to arrive at a genre’s “proper” definition, interpretation or evaluation, but to explore the material ways in which genres are culturally operative. By shifting focus away from projects that attempt to provide the definitive definition or most nuanced interpretation of a genre, we can look toward the ways in which genre definitions, interpretations, and evaluations are part of the larger cultural operations of genre. (Mittel 2004, 14)

To this end, Mittel proposed a critical reconsideration of genre, a new method of text categorization for media studies. Instead of treating genre as a set of static categories, Mittel proposes the idea of genre as a series of critical questions. “Since genre discourses do not stem solely from a central source—be it industrial or ideological—genre history should be viewed as a fluid and active process, not a teleological tale of textual rise and fall. Thus instead of typical questions of definition or interpretation, we should foreground *questions of cultural process* to analyze media genres. (Mittel 2004, 16)” To Mittel, the police procedural show is not a single box into which texts are sorted based on relevance, but a critical idea that influences both the production and interpretation of certain texts. Mittel’s concept

foregrounds the idea of cultural process at the heart of text production, examining the methodology of process as more important than the end results of categorization.

This approach draws heavily on the work of Michel Foucault in his examinations of social categories. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault says “What is constitutive is the action that divides madness, and not the science elaborated once this division is made and calm restored. What is originary is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason’s subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point (Foucault 1988[1965], ix).” What interests Foucault is the process of division, the way in which the definition of categories creates the category through the very act of definition. It is from this idea that I make the assertion: genres are made, not found.

This methodology could be usefully adapted to bring thematic study back to folkloristics, while preserving the possibility of other genre distinctions. Instead of relying on a set of static boxes for study, the examination of folkloric texts could be instead based on the examination of described common characteristics. A genre would be a circle drawn around a set of texts based on criteria for examination. This method allows for the highlighting of specific textual similarities while downplaying or ignoring irrelevant specific differences. Multiple texts on similar subjects could be considered a genre based on that similarity rather than separated based on formal differences. A ballad and a corrido could be considered one genre

based on their formal similarities rather than separated based on their cultural differences. Additionally, emic processes of genre creation could be highlighted, allowing the emergence of genre from context rather than the application of genre to context.

Historia: A New Approach

To demonstrate this revised principle and to allow the examination of the Salem texts, I propose a genre I call *historia*, after the term used by the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus to describe the oft-amazing tales of the past he brought back from the reaches of the known world. This genre examines texts with a specific type of subject matter dealt with in a specific geographical/historical fashion and a specific orientation towards the broader implications of internal narratives. With this genre category, I can highlight the differences important to the process of discursive historical performance and gloss over some of the generic differences irrelevant to such questions. Most importantly, this highlights the way in which the different performances of history in Salem exist in discourse with each other, being influenced by and influencing each other through discourses of historical authority and narrative construction.

To phrase explicitly the individual critical questions that constitute the genre, I will address myself to a specific pair of texts, the party invocation and the photocopy handed out on the street. One, does the subject matter of the text engage in localized historical discourse? That is, does the text take a thesis or antithesis position on events of the local past based on a specific rhetorical intent? Two, is the

text a folkloric performance? That is, does it show characteristics of aesthetic communication through structured, culturally linked acts? Three, Is the text an allegorical narrative that extrapolates outwards about the broader implications of local historical events? That is, does it imply the events of history described provide general principles applicable to larger ontological structures?

These principles can be seen in the preface example of the participatory finale of the trial of Bridget Bishop, which will be addressed more fully later as well. Bishop's trial presents a portion of the trials as a legal event, making the argument that the trials were conducted according to legal procedures rather than as a howling mob attacking people at random. The trial conclusion shows characteristics of folkloric performance, allowing the variation in voting patterns and the potential of aesthetic communication. Finally, the trial speaks of the larger issues at stake, arguing that the larger phenomenon of the Salem Witch Hysteria was made up of smaller moments, specific turning points where things could have gone differently, acting as a call to vigilance and civic responsibility.

These questions and these brief example texts provide the model for *historia*, literally, 'things of perception' from the ancient Greek. As used by Herodotus, *historia* represents a more subjective perspective on past events that allows for outward extrapolation. So, texts whose relations to these questions are the same, regardless of broader distinctions of form and smaller distinctions of context, can be categorized as generically related in order to contain the Salem performances within a single circle of examination.

Important to this definition are both the questions it asks and the questions it does not ask. For *historia*, the preceding questions deal with the definition of a broad category. This does not mean that questions of form are irrelevant, simply that they are contrasts within the category rather than contrasts used to establish the category. The relationship between form and content is still important, but it isn't a categorizing distinction.

This differentiation between categorizing and non-categorizing distinctions is important for the broader implications of this method of genre. Within this specific instance, the difference between a walking tour and an act of ritual magic may define their specific characteristics, but do not divide them from each other for study purposes. This aspect of categorization is important for contextual study because it recognizes the discursive relationships between the tour and the ritual based on emic context. In a broader example, the formal differences between ballads and folktales could be examined differently in different studies. A study devoted to the examination of poetic form in narrative can use such a formal distinction to exclude folktales from the genre of study. A study devoted to the examination of narrative characteristics in Robin Hood stories can use the formal distinction as a non-categorizing distinction to compare the methodology of multiple texts, studying the differences of form as an internal difference without deeming one formal type irrelevant. To that end, while internal differences between forms will be considered in the case of the Salem texts, they will not subsume internal similarities.

For *historia* in the Salem context, some important internal distinctions emerge. First, there is the way in which different narratives use formal characteristics to enable narrative content. For instance, the discussion of historic property lines in a walking tour is enabled by the movement along the historic property lines themselves. Alternately, the animatronic sculptures of the museum allow a robust depiction of witches' familiars unavailable to purely oral narrative. Second, the way in which different performances encode difference claims to authority in their narratives. For instance, a performance may use 'real court documents' or feature the presence of a 'real witch'. Third, performances selectively use different historical information to present a historical interpretation of various aspects of the hysteria. For instance, performances may include or exclude the voices of the teenage girls who were the primary accusers in the Witch hysteria. These internal differences show much of the variety of *historia* within Salem and give interesting perspective on the social function of different performances. Fundamentally, these internal differences are what create the discursive reality of *historia*, allowing the use of similar material to create different narratives with different meanings.

However, before examining the specific manifestations of *historia*, the characteristics of the genre need to be refined, exploring the different ways in which the questions at the heart of *historia* have manifested within the academy. First, we examine the question of historical discourse and the de-objectification of history and tradition as a way of exploring the relationship between *historia* and the

historic lack of consensus on Salem. Second, we look at the nature of folkloric performances and the way in which those characteristics affect the possible work of *historia*. Third, we examine the grand narratives of American character, the deconstruction of said narratives and the way in which similar narratives can emerge from performative acts to understand the allegorical nature of *historia*. These examinations should help define the work of *historia* in Salem and provide a set of analytical frames for deeper analysis of the wealth of Salem texts.

Chapter 3: History, Tradition and Discourse

History resists being closed into neat and final tale. Claude Lévi Strauss says history is our myth, and he is right, because history is used in literate societies as myth is in nonliterate ones to provide a distinct but relevant realm within which to explore the validity of the current regime.

-Henry Glassie



Outside the Witch Dungeon stand two historical plaques next to a mock stockade. One plaque details the presence of the old Gaol, no longer present in the location, while the second indicates that the first plaque originally stood two blocks north of the current location. This is a peculiar demarcation of historical location, twice removed from history and doubly referential. Salem is full of such history, removed

from original locations and referenced not through primary documents, but through secondary stories. Salem is a tour of places no longer there, an examination of memories without reference points, a discourse built on absence.

Are *historia* history? Can something as selective and interactive as the performed trial of Bridget Bishop truly count as history? And if it can, what can we even know from history anyway? Historian Eric Foner says “For years, historians have been aware that historical memory is unavoidably selective and that historical traditions are “invented” and manipulated. Forgetting some aspects of the past is as much a part of historical understanding as remembering others. (Foner 2002, 201)” This general problem, how the selective use of history and tradition can present history provides a question of how *historia* narratives can fit into historical discourse. Are they simply a variety of “invented tradition” or can does their existence show a larger discourse at work.

To examine the nature of *historia* as engaging in historical discourse, we first turn to the state of historical discourse as a way of understanding how such informal history may function. The past 50 years have seen many holes poked in the boat of objective conceptions of history and tradition. Activist movements, identity politics and historians themselves have been quick to point out the biases and normative tendencies of historical writing as well as the relatively shallow past of supposedly timeless traditions. These actions have gained strong footholds against racist, sexist, imperialist and heteronormative methods of history.

However, this practice has also created to a complex problem regarding the nature of history and tradition which were once stalwart reference points in the academy. This chapter seeks to address these critiques in a way that makes comprehensible the ideas of history and tradition.

To examine these deconstructive critiques of history and tradition, we must understand them individually in reference to their position in academic discourse. First, this chapter will address the critique of history leveled by cultural studies scholars and identity politics, addressing the positions taken in reference to post-colonial history and the negotiation of identity within. Second, this chapter will move to the deconstruction of tradition in the disciplines of history, anthropology and folklore with attention to questions of invention and authority. Taken together, these critiques show the ways in which these ideas require re-imagination and may be reinterpreted to better allow use in the future. In her book *In Search of Authenticity*, Regina Bendix says that “Histories of Disciplines allow us to recognize that knowledge is made, not found, and that knowledge, once made, is put to use beyond the small community of knowledge making specialists. (Bendix 1997, 220)” Understanding this dimension of the examination of history and tradition will allow us to formulate more responsible forms of knowledge making, building on the methods of ways of the past while addressing the needs of the present.

Cultural Studies v. History

At its core, the cultural studies critique of history could be boiled down to a simple statement, that history has been told by the majority as an tool to deny

agency to the colonized, the marginalized and those deemed culturally deviant. By examining the work of cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall and feminist historian Gerda Lerner, we can get a better sense of some of the academic critiques of hegemonic practices at the heart of historical discourse.

At the heart of Stuart Hall's critique of history is an attempt to "to open a dialogue, an investigation, on the subject of cultural identity and representation. (Hall 1994[1990], 392)" In examining the way in which historical narratives have been clearly transformed through post-colonial efforts at cultural intelligibility, Hall identifies the way in which historical narratives are inherently biased by the agendas of the teller, using language of reclamation to attempt a fixation of identities for purposes of power consolidation. Hall's conception of history emerges in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora,"

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 1994[1990], 394)

Thus to Hall, while history is a reference point from which cultural identities emerge, the relationship is not one of variable present—essentialized past, but one of variable present and selectively deployed past.

The heart of Hall's argument with history is that narratives of the past are constructed to serve agendas in the present. While Hall presents essential

problems, he does not eschew the continued use of history, as he says, “The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple factual ‘past’, since our relation to it, like the child’s relation to the mother, is always-already ‘after the break’. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. (Hall 1994[1990], 395)” In this way, Hall refutes the objective role of history due to the strict ties to colonial hegemonic narratives while acknowledging that historical information will continue to be constructed as a reference point for identity.

A similar critique emerges in the work of feminist historian Gerda Lerner. Exploring the dynamics of the concept of ‘Women’s History’ in her book *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*, Lerner takes apart the very concept of history as a universal object.

Even in its surface meaning, the term ‘Women’s History’ calls into question the claim to universality which ‘History’ generally assumes as a given. If historical studies, as we traditionally know them, were actually focused on men and women alike, then there would be no need for a separate subject. Men and women built civilization and culture and one would assume that any historical account written about any given period would recognize that basic fact. But traditional history has been written and interpreted by men in an androcentric frame of reference; it might quite properly be described as the history of men. The very term ‘Women’s History’ calls attention to the fact that something is missing from historical scholarship and it aims to document and reinterpret that which is missing. Seen in that light, Women’s History is simply “the history of women”. (Lerner 1979, xiii)

At the outset, Lerner identifies a simple but pervasive problem at the heart of historical narratives; specifically that the dominant historical narrative of

‘civilization and culture’ seems to leave out half of the individuals involved in its development based on gender. In response to this problem Lerner suggests the development of a new strategy of historical study: Women’s History.

Women’s History is a stance which demands that women be included in whatever topic is under discussion. It is an angle of vision which permits us to see that women live and have lived in a world defined by men and most frequently dominated by men and yet have shaped and influenced that world and all human events. (Lerner 1979, xiv)

Lerner’s critique is a clear one. History is biased against women and requires revision in order to account for this ignored half of humanity. Identifying the source of the problem, Lerner focuses on the way in which women have existed as a group ‘defined’ and ‘dominated’ by men and thus have been ignored by history.

Within the book, Lerner does not content herself with simple problem identification, but lays out the concept of Women’s history as “both a world view and a compensatory strategy for offsetting the male bias of traditional history. It is an intellectual movement of seriousness and considerable range, which aims for a new synthesis which will eventually make its continuation unnecessary. (Lerner 1979, xv)” Fundamentally, according to Lerner, Women’s history is a course correction necessary to correct the overall biases of historical writing.

What both of these critiques have in common is the identification of hegemonic bias in historical writing. Both argue against the objective, universal image of history based on the way in which historical narratives have been told, either to subvert the identity of colonized peoples or to leave out the contributions of women in historical practice. In each case, history is seen as including significant

bias based on the position of the teller, a bias which renders such history invalid and in need of significant correction to return to usefulness.

One of the interesting shared characteristics of these critiques is an unwillingness to surrender history as a whole. Both Hall and Lerner view history as an important tool of study, but offer course corrections, steering history away from the colonial, sexist narrative that creates objective information and reifies difference using narratives of essence and dominance. Instead, they see a redistribution of the power at the heart of the telling of history a way in which multiple voices can create historical narrative. This model provides the initial problem to address about historical discourse: how do we examine history if the telling of it is inherently limited by the telling?

The Death of Tradition

While the formal practice of historical narrative has come under fire, tradition has also endured serious attack from deconstructionalists. Concepts that underlie a sense of timelessness in the popular imagination have been shown by historians, anthropologists and folklorists to have emerged within the historical and sometimes quite recent past. These critiques have come from several directions but all have the same general point, that traditionalizing is a contemporary cultural process rather than an objective historical status. This critique is strongly linked to concepts of history, nation and identity, as tradition is one of the key pillars on which these stand.

One of best-known critiques of tradition comes from the Marxist historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger in their edited volume *The Invention of Tradition*. This book addresses the use of tradition by regimes in Europe as a way of building imperialist prestige. Within, Hobsbawm and Ranger take tradition to task as a form of oppressive historicizing. “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawm 1992[1983], 1)” This critique, strongly linked with the Gramscian concept of hegemony, points to the use of tradition in relation to the practices of governmental succession as the use of new material phrased in a language of timelessness in order to attempt to reinforce hegemonic domination.

In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting for historians of the past two centuries. (Hobsbawm 1992[1983], 2)

This critique is clear on the value of such invented traditions. While Hobsbawm is clear to point out the nature of traditions as invented, his underlying critique is that such inventions ultimately undermine the validity of imperial institutions, as the initial claims function to authorize imperialism. To Hobsbawm, an invented tradition is ahistorical and thus invalid, primarily a hegemonic tool rather than a liberating one.

This critique is echoed in the work of Richard Dorson on Fakelore. Richard Dorson's attempts in both the popular press and academic world to discredit collectors of folklore who made no distinction between materials collected from actual everyday use and materials developed for commercial interest has drawn criticism but at its heart was an attempt to identify some traditions as invalid. To Dorson, the distinction was less about the potential hegemonic uses of such materials and more about the way in which the lack of distinction denigrated legitimate folk traditions. Dorson's 1976 defense of his work makes clear his aims.

'Folklore and Fake Lore' mounted an attack on the growing popularization, commercialization, and resulting distortion of folk materials, as exemplified in the growing shelf of Paul Bunyan books and the treasuries of Ben Botkin...My article on 'Folklore and Fake Lore' drew a distinction between popularly documented oral folklore collected directly in the field from the tellers of the tales and singers of folksongs, and the re-written, saccharine versions of fake lore. (R. Dorson, *Folklore, Academe, and the Marketplace* 1976, 5)

In this mission, Dorson was part of a larger movement on the use of tradition as added value rather than simply as a matter of legitimate cultural development.

Dorson focused his critique on the use of tradition in capitalistic endeavors. Looking at the inclusion of material—specifically Paul Bunyan stories—whose link to tradition was invented by advertising executives, Dorson outlined the problem as undermining the legitimacy of cultural examination through folklore. If material that does not emerge from cultural circumstances is included along with material that does, it becomes impossible to make cultural conclusions about folklore.

Dorson's ultimate critique was that Fakelore attempted to use the language of

tradition in order to increase the cultural value of illegitimate cultural products. While Dorson's argument failed to capture academic momentum, it serves as an early call in folklore for the reexamination of 'traditional' material.

This call was taken up by Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin in their examinations of tradition. Handler and Linnekin provide a folkloric/anthropological model which theorizes tradition as a process rather than a quality, one which works to link cultural practice to group identity. At the heart of their critique lies a question "does tradition refer to a core of inherited culture traits whose continuity and boundedness are analogous to that of a natural object, or must tradition be understood as a wholly symbolic construction? (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 273)" This addressing of tradition as a symbolic construction rather than a natural quality is the heart of the deconstructionalist critique of tradition.

To Handler and Linnekin, tradition is a function of constructed continuity, through which objects and practices are linked to the past through reference in the present to both continuity and discontinuity. By stating that a present action is inherently linked (continuity) to another action from which it is separated by time (discontinuity) implies a symbolic link between the two. This relationship, because it is framed as a rhetorical action rather than an objective relationship, must be seen in certain ways.

Thus we can no longer speak of tradition in terms of the approximate identity of some objective thing that changes while remaining the same. Instead, we must understand tradition as a symbolic process that both presupposes past symbolisms and creatively reinterprets them. In other words, tradition is not a bounded entity made up of bounded constituent parts, but a process of interpretation, attributing

meaning in the present though making reference to the past (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 287).

To Handler and Linnekin, tradition is not a characteristic held by an object or practice. One cannot speak of tradition as something an object has, but as something that it done to an object. “In short, ‘traditional’ is not an objective property of phenomena but an assigned meaning. When we insist that the past is always constructed in the present, we are not suggesting that present-day acts and ideas have no correspondence to the past. But we argue that the relation of prior to unfolding representations can be equally well termed discontinuous as continuous (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 286-87).”

Regina Bendix has addressed this problem and its relationship to the discipline of folklore in her book *In Search of Authenticity*. Bendix’s approach focuses on the relationship of the disciplinary history of folklore to the idea of cultural authenticity. Looking at the history of folklore studies, Bendix approaches the study of the traditional as the application of narratives of ‘authenticity’. According to Bendix, the idea of authenticity was the process of legitimating cultural forms.

The search for authenticity is fundamentally an emotional and moral quest. But this experiential dimension does not provide lasting satisfaction and authenticity needs to be augmented with pragmatic and evaluative dimensions. Declaring something authentic legitimated the subject that was declared authentic, and the declaration in turn can legitimate the authenticator, though here such concerns as social standing, education, and the ability to promote one’s views also play a role. Processes of authentication bring about material representation by elevating the authenticated into the category of the noteworthy. (Bendix 1997, 7)

Bendix's conception of the traditional in folkloric practices is about the creation not just of tradition, but the creation of the non-tradition within a system of value. Similar to the Hegelian idea of the self defined by the other, Bendix presents the complication of both the authentic and the inauthentic being constructions. "The notion of authenticity implies the existence of its opposite, the fake, and this dichotomous construct is at the heart of what makes authenticity problematic. (Bendix 1997, 9)" This implication of authenticity as a two edged sword is an important aspect of the critique of tradition. Rather than understanding the process of traditionalization as only rendering some texts marked, it clearly states the ways in which such a process marks all texts within a given system.

Interestingly, Bendix's refutation deals explicitly with the desired results of such an examination. By examining the way in which folklore studies have been so obsessed with the preservation of disappearing authentic culture in conflict with developing inauthentic culture, Bendix hopes to break the addiction to authenticity as a limiting discourse of authority.

A history of the constructions of authenticity within folklore studies, then, is also, hopefully, liberating. Such a history demonstrates that expressive culture is not about to disappear. Once we have overcome the dichotomy within our disciplinary thinking, "authenticity versus inauthenticity" can become an object of study itself. We can study the negotiation of authenticity once we have ceased to be a negotiating party, or once we admit to our participation in the negotiating process. (Bendix 1997, 23)

Bendix confronts dialogues of authenticity to disprove the existence of authenticity in tradition so that scholars can address the notion of tradition differently. Bendix's ideal is the study not of the results of the negotiation of

tradition and authority in the discourse of authenticity, but the examination of how such aspects are constructed through academic discourses.

Fundamentally, these critiques of tradition are all based on the argument that the concept of tradition as an unbroken link to the past requires revision, as tradition is a characteristic given in the present rather than an objective one. While the individual authors may disagree on the widespread nature of invented traditions, they agree that traditionality is not an objective characteristic and that the conditions of performance in the present are more important for understanding the relationship between past and present. This methodology of simultaneous continuity and discontinuity is useful in understanding the relationship between *historia* performances and the history they portray when viewed in relationship to the nature of performative acts.

A Model from Gender and Psychoanalysis

These difficulties provide complex problems for the examination of *historia* in terms of their relationship to historical and traditional material. While it is true that “history everywhere is political, in the sense that contemporary problems and values profoundly affect accounts of the past, (Foner 2002, 77)” does this make such historical narrative invalid? If history is categorically skewed towards the narrator through relationships of power and tradition is a product of the present rather than the past, how can we examine these manifestations of historical discourse in relation to both the events of the past and the nature of the performer in a way that does not delegitimize the historical narrator? The critiques of both history and

tradition focus on problematic essentializing, so one place to turn for a model of study is a discipline that has struggled actively with such essentializing discourses: gender studies.

Judith Butler is a luminary of gender theory. In her book, *Gender Trouble*, Butler attempts to deconstruct gender as the socio-cultural categorization of people into essentialized categories of male and female. Drawing on the theories of J.L. Austin's performative and Michel Foucault's examinations of socio-linguistic definition and power, Butler theorizes gender as a series of performative acts, constitutive social acts that create and negotiate social categories, which create a societal image of gender through a continuous mimetic process rather than through objective observation of reality. According to Butler, social acts of gender categorization create a notion of identity through the creation of contrasting categories. The simplest example of this is the customary birth announcement in the United States. The statement "It's a boy" or "It's a girl" performs an act of social categorization. The object of discussion goes from being an ungendered object 'it' to being a gendered subject 'a boy/girl'. This statement is a performative act, creating social reality as it is uttered. According to Butler's (and Austin's) formulation, the performative is the enacting of social reality. The performative act is itself constitutive of symbolic categories and all gendered identity emerges from such performative acts. By this formulation, gendered acts are also gendering acts, both creating and inhabiting essentialized categories.

Butler's work *Bodies that Matter* is also salient to this discussion. In this book, Butler extends her examination to conceptions of biological sex, arguing that the categorization of bodies into sexes is equally constructed. According to Butler, the application of social categories of identity onto physical bodies is a superimposition of cultural symbols onto non-symbolic reality. As she puts it "What I would propose in place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as a site or surface, but as *a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface that we call matter.* (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 1993, 9)" Butler's argument is a complex one that rests on Jacques Lacan's theories of symbolic codes and their relation to reality. To understand the way in which she outlines the fixing of symbols into materials, these concepts need to be outlined further.

Lacan's theory of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real draws heavily on Ferdinand de Saussure's famous pronouncement about disconnect between signifier and signified. De Saussure's key argument delineating the difference between description and reality is the underlying theory of Lacan's Symbolic, Imaginary and Real⁴. The relationship of this triad explores the way in which people interact with the world around them psychologically and linguistically.

The first of these categories, the Imaginary, represents the internal mental manifestation of reality based on perception. To take the example of a tree, within the Imaginary, one has a concept of both what the specific tree is and how it links categorically to the category of tree. Indeed, the Imaginary is an overall sense of

⁴ Capitalized throughout to differentiate Lacan's categories from more generic uses of the terms.

categorical reality. By this conception, an individual both atomizes and universalizes the world, understanding things as individualized objects and manifestations of categories.

The second of Lacan's concepts is that of the Symbolic, the linguistic, systematic, externalized codes through which individuals and societies attempt to describe the world. A Symbolic utterance draws on the Imaginary and may refer to the Real, but it is necessarily reductive, changing sensation, memory and neural connections into relatable concepts, divorced from what they describe by the disconnect between signifier and signified. The Symbolic is to a certain degree inherently categorical, as even specific reference frequently takes the form of 'definite article-categorical noun' e.g. 'That tree.'

The disconnect between signifier and signified also manifests in Lacanian terms as the Real. As described by Stephen Friedlander and Kareen Malone, the Real "is a topological concept that refers to something that necessarily lies beyond speech. It is not a *thing* in itself, a pre-given kernel of being. The Real is unsayable, and as such, it embodies the desire that motivates speech, including the repressions that underlie identification and the failures and impasses of symbolization. (Friedlander 2000, 13)", the Real represents those aspects of reality unavailable to Symbolic descriptions. For example, there is something about an individual tree unable to be captured through Symbolic description. Any symbol reduces an object or concept to a signifier and thus only captures the ability to invoke sense memory rather than capturing the object itself. While objects do exist, there is a significant

difference between the reality of their existence and the symbols of description used to invoke them.

Butler applies this understanding to the concept of biological sex in her book *Bodies that Matter*. Arguing against the idea that gender is simply the socialization of natural binary difference between biological sexes, Butler argues that the concept of biological sex is a Symbolic construct that delimits categories in an inherently limited fashion rather than an objective representation of the Real.

To provide a simple example of such subjective categorization, imagine four people, a blond man, a brunette man, a blonde woman and a brunette woman. To categorize these people according to their physical sexual characteristics is to omit the categorical difference in hair color. To categorize them by hair color does the same in reverse. In each case, perceived similarities are highlighted in a variable hierarchy placing certain similarities higher than others.

Butler's argument uses Lacanian concepts of disconnection between the Symbolic and the Real combined with Foucauldian conceptions of the power of labeling as categorization to outline the arbitrary nature of the division of bodies into sexes. The Symbolic nature of sexual categories, transcending the simple biological function of chromosomes and zygotes attempt to create sexes as Symbolic categories into which all bodies can be split. No definition of biological sex as a binary division can include all of humanity. Instead, the symbolic definition creates categories into which individual people are sorted. Butler's argument is fundamentally that these categories constitute reality through performative acts

that draw upon Symbolic methods. Because the categories themselves are inherently non-objective due to the deconstruction of category in Lacan's Symbolic, all such categories must be examined as discursive acts, presenting individualized arguments of gender that create the system of gender and sex identification present in society and implicitly for other categories as well.

History as Performative

This conception of Symbolic categorization based on selective description of reality could serve well in the analysis of historical narratives. As performances of gender establish a coherent understanding of the world based on the Symbolic categorization of unique bodies, performance of history can be seen as a coherent understanding of the world based on the Symbolic categorization of unique events. In short, historical narratives are individualized performatives that create the discrete events that they reference through selective presentation of continuity and discontinuity.

To rephrase, temporal events are unique. Louis Napoleon is not Napoleon Bonaparte come again as a farce, regardless of Karl Marx's statement. While internet folklore may claim eerie coincidences between the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, the actual events are quite distinct. By establishing these events as parallel, performatively categorizing them as similar, the historian presents a narrative of history based on continuity between succession and assassination.

This depends equally on specific interpretation of historical events. Taking the aforementioned similarities between the assassinations of Lincoln and Kennedy, a widely circulated piece of internet folklore, 'cites' several coincidences between the two events.

Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846.
John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.

Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.
John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.

The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters.

Both were particularly concerned with civil rights.

Both wives lost their children while living in the White House.

Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.

Both were shot in the head.

Lincoln's secretary, Kennedy, warned him not to go to the theatre.
Kennedy's secretary, Lincoln, warned him not to go to Dallas.

Both were assassinated by Southerners.

Both were succeeded by Southerners.

Both successors were named Johnson.

Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808.
Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth was born in 1839.
Lee Harvey Oswald was born in 1939.

Both assassins were known by their three names.

Both names are comprised of fifteen letters

Booth ran from the theater and was caught in a warehouse.

Oswald ran from a warehouse and was caught in a theater.

Booth and Oswald were assassinated before their trials. (Mikkelson 2007)

This piece of folklore attempts to establish these historical events as running deeply parallel, as if the assassinations were part of an overall pattern. In this narrative, the events are categorized as similar. The author wishes to frame the events as so similar as to be uncanny, but other examinations of the two events paint different comparisons.

According to official inquiries into the assassinations, the events are particularly dissimilar. The military tribunal that examined Lincoln's assassination convicted eight people of acting in conspiracy with Booth, hanging four and imprisoning four. This narrative of events pointed to a pro-confederate conspiracy as being behind the assassination (Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln 1865). The Warren Commission, assigned to examine the Kennedy assassination, concluded the following. "The Commission has found no evidence that either Lee Harvey Oswald or Jack Ruby was part of any conspiracy, domestic or foreign, to assassinate President Kennedy (Warren Report 1964)." By these two narratives, the assassinations are distinct in their motivation and enactment, Lincoln's being the result of a conspiracy and Kennedy's being the result of a lone gunman.

However, if one examines the view taken in the book *Say Goodbye to America* by Matthew Smith, similarities emerge. According to Smith, the Kennedy assassination was the result of a conspiracy of rogue CIA agents upset about

Kennedy's domestic and foreign policy, including the Bay of Pigs. In this narrative of events, a massive conspiracy existed, including even Vice President Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI. In this the motivation and enactment of the assassinations are similar, both being the result of politically motivated conspiracies.

These three narratives each attempt to frame an understanding of a category of events, a way of examining two potentially similar pivotal events from American history. Each gestures to a form of parallelism, either that of uncanny similarity, political distinction or conspiratorial parallel. In each case, two distinct events are explicitly framed as linked to each other, performing a discrete category of presidential assassinations that grants greater parallels to Lincoln and Kennedy than to say, Garfield and McKinley or Reagan and Roosevelt.

Thus, the individual historical narratives perform distinct representations of history, in this case through disagreement over the nature or existence of specific historical events. However, distinct representations of history can even exist when events in question are agreed upon. Take for example the case of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte. Both his supporters and his detractors drew comparisons between Louis and Napoleon I of France, but these comparisons were quite different.

For his supporters, referring to him as Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was an attempt to draw a sense of continuity between him and the prior emperor, establishing parallelism. By linking a current leader, and candidate for the

presidency, to a popular leader from then recent history, they sought to establish a sense of continuity between the two, presaging an equal national fervor.

For his opponents, most famously Karl Marx, the parallel had negative connotations. As Marx puts it “Hegel says somewhere that that great historic facts and personages recur twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Caussidière for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the *Montagne* of 1848 to 1851 for the *Montagne* of 1793 to 1795, the Nephew for the Uncle. (Marx 1963[1897], 15)” Napoleon III was a farcical repeat of Napoleon I rather than a glorious return.

What is interesting in this is that both sides used the same overall narrative of historical events as the basis for their arguments. Both draw comparisons between Napoleon I and Napoleon III and both consider the parallel significant to the historical narrative, but they fundamentally differ on the nature of the historical narrative, with one version being a political continuation, and one being a political devolution. There is a fundamental agreement in the appropriateness of the comparison between rulers, but a fundamental disagreement about the trajectory of the comparison, leading to two representations that agree on the factual evidence with disagreement on interpretation.

This conception of history is useful in understanding the relationship between the individual historical narrative and the general historical discourse. The key of this concept is the way in which history can be viewed as a performative representation. By describing actual events using Symbolic language, a categorical

understanding emerges defining actual events through performance of those events. By historicizing those events, that is, defining them as historically significant to the present, one creates a historicized performance, that is, an action that creates history.

The performative approach to historical narrative incorporates the criticisms of the cultural studies scholars, in that historical bias is understood as emerging from performative positioning. One cannot enact a performance without social position, and that position affects the potential performance. This approach incorporates the criticisms of tradition. If all historicity is a performance in the present, then tradition is continually a reinvention as it is performed anew each time, establishing principles of both continuity and discontinuity as a way of creating the historical. Finally, it incorporates the model of performative reality. Historical events are themselves cultural categories enacted through individual narrative representations in a way that creates the idea of historical parallelism that such categories rest upon.

History, Historia and Hysteria

These reflections on the nature of historical discourse relate directly to the nature of the *historia* as a manifestation of historical discourse. Referring back to the initial definition of the genre, we see the first critical question, ‘does the subject matter of the text engage in localized historical discourse? That is, does the text take a thesis or antithesis position on events of the local past based on a specific rhetorical intent?’ The existence of *historia* within historical discourse takes on

greater meaning with the understanding of historical events as performative representations. *Historia* are explicitly performative acts, positioning themselves in relation to the events of the past to establish continuity and discontinuity in order to meet rhetorical ends and negotiate the categorical nature of said historical events. In this way, *historia* can be seen as primary manifestations of historical discourse, seeking to educate partially to establish narrative authority over the categories represented in the historical conception of Salem.

But they do not engage in such a discourse from scratch. The Salem Witch Hysteria occupies an interesting position in American history as a period whose events are hotly debated not just for motivations and causes, but for the nature of the events included. To understand the way in which the Salem narratives base their narratives of events on prior narratives of events, I offer an abbreviated summary of some of the key arguments on the nature of the events of 1692. More robust summaries of the historical discourse on Salem exist; this summary is primarily to establish the lack of consensus on the events and to highlight some of the conflicts that already exist in the discourse in which the Salem *historia* engage.

Several aspects of the Hysteria period are well established. In early 1692, several young girls in Salem Town were apparently afflicted by hallucinations and convulsive fits. Whether based initially on their own idea, the diagnosis by a local doctor or on influence from other people in the community, they placed the blame for the affliction of acts of witchcraft performed by a number of community members. These accusations spread throughout Salem town and into Salem Village

and Salem Farms, as well as accusing former residents who lived in Wells, Maine. The first individual brought to trial was Bridget Bishop, who had been tried previously for witchcraft and was executed in June 1692. As accusations continued, over one hundred and fifty people were jailed—exact numbers and names vary somewhat based on spotty records and the inclusion or exclusion of infants born in jail or imprisoned with their mothers—and by September, a total of nineteen people had been executed, all of them hung—the Puritans did not burn witches—after refusing to enter a guilty plea. One man died while being tortured for a confession and several others died in jail due to sickness. The trials came to an end at the insistence of the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and those remaining in jail were slowly released when they could pay their debts, having been charged room and board for their time in jail. The last person to be released from jail was one of the first accused, Tituba, a slave belonging to Samuel Parris. In all, the hysteria lasted about a year and a half between the afflictions and the final release, though most of the action took place in a six month period between April and September.

While these aspects of the trials are fairly well agreed upon, historians have argued extensively about the nature of the guilty, the motivations of the accusers and the systemic causes for the conflict. Because of the lack of much primary evidence on the trial—many trial notes were destroyed in the years following the trials—many historians look to the contemporary case of *Goodwin v. Glover* from Boston in 1688 because the surviving evidence is much better. In order to present

the dialogue in context, successive arguments will be presented with their positions on the crisis.

The first major historical work on the trials was Charles Wentworth Upham's succinctly titled 1867 book *Salem Witchcraft With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*. Upham's perspective on the situation focused extensively on the motivations of the afflicted girls. Upham argues in his work that the physical symptoms displayed by the girls were fraudulent, and that the girls used techniques learned by cultural experience either to gain attention or out of more nefarious intention. (Upham 1999[1867]) In 1907, George Lyman Kittredge, in his *Witchcraft in Old and New England* put forward the argument that the event itself is not a historical aberration, matching overall patterns in witchcraft belief and persecution from Europe and contemporary New England (Kittredge 1929[1907]).

Ernest Caulfield's 1943 "Pediatric Aspects of the Salem Witch Tragedy" brought the debate to the *American Journal of the Diseases of Children*. Caulfield's argument was based on his expertise as a pediatrician and argued that the behavior of kids in the contemporary Goodwin v. Glover matched the symptoms of hysteria. Caulfield went on to argue that such behavior was encouraged as a response to panic by Puritan child-rearing practices which exacerbated the problem (Caulfield 1943). Perry Miller, in his 1953 *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, reiterated some of Kittredge's assertion of the mundane nature of the hysteria, asserting that the event did not have a lasting effect on the Puritan mindset,

representing something of a normal occurrence in the history of Puritan New England (Miller 1953). This argument is very much the antonym of Kai T. Erikson's argument in *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* from 1966. Erikson argues that the Salem trials are a manifestation of the breakdown of early Puritan social order as the ideal of the "city on a hill" seen in early Puritan rhetoric is challenged by internal and external conflict. For Erikson, the general decline of the Puritan society led to social anxiety over the ideal of pure community and broke out into society-endorsed violence in the Witch trials (Erikson 1966).

In 1969, Chadwick Hansen wrote *Witchcraft at Salem* which took a controversial stance. Hansen's argument is psychosomatic, that while later generations understand the lack of objective effect from witchcraft, that Puritans in 1692 were believers in witchcraft and that belief could translate to psychosomatic effect. Hansen argues further that the circumstantial evidence for practice on the part of the accused is significant and potentially persuasive, arguing that in the case of Goodwin v. Glover, the evidence points clearly to the practice of 'image magic' a form of sympathetic magic. Hansen's argument boils down to the fact that since both accused and accursed believed in the efficacy of witchcraft, that the effects could be both real—though psychological—and intentional (Hansen 1985[1969]). Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's 1974 book *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* takes a more sociological view of the conflict. Nissenbaum and Boyer theorize that the conflict is a manifestation of a conflict over

the towns choice of minister, divided between those who supported Samuel Parris and those who had supported George Burroughs. Boyer and Nissenbaum's argument rests on the economic and cultural ties between families in the area and those accused focusing on the Porter and Putnam families. (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* 1974)

1976 saw the publication of two articles in the journal *Science*. The first, Linnda R. Caporael's "Ergotism: the Satan Loosed in Salem?" took evidence from the Boyer and Nissenbaum book to theorize the possibility that the symptoms experienced by the afflicted girls were brought on by the consumption of ergot, a mold that grows on damp rye and causes hallucinations and convulsions. Caporael's argument rests on the fact that the growing conditions specifically in the property owned by the Parris and Putnam were perfect for the development of ergot, with rye being produced in damp conditions. This, in addition to the fact that adolescent girls are particularly susceptible to ergot poisoning, provided the core of her argument (Caporael 1976).

The other article from *Science* in 1976 came from Nicholas P. Spanos and Jack Gottlieb. Their article, "Ergotism and the Salem Village Witch Trials", was published later that year in response to Caporael's initial argument. Spanos and Gottlieb argue in their article that Caporael is wrong, that the evidence does not point conclusively to ergotism due to several factors: the lack of symptoms in other individuals in the same households, the spottiness of evidence on whether the conditions were right for the production of ergot and the variation in ergot species

that precludes convulsive ergotism. The notable thing about this article is the degree to which the historical discourse on Salem is direct and individual, with specific responses to prior arguments (Spanos 1976).

Carol F. Karlsen's 1987 book *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* focused on the crisis through the lens of gender.

According to Karlsen, the economic and political independence of individuals such as Bridget Bishop and Rebecca Nurse, early accused, provided a threat to the Puritan patriarchal society and that witch trials were a way of regulating women who stepped out of societal roles. This argument provided that the pattern of witch accusation in Colonial New England in general and Salem in specific followed models similar to those in Europe, targeting independent women in statistically significant numbers (Karlsen 1987).

Other works have focused more on the influence of context on the events of 1692. In Richard Goodbeer's *The Devil's Dominion*, the historian argues that folk magic was common in the region, with a complex worldview that differentiated between religious perspectives and everyday life. To Goodbeer, the hysteria is a cultural conflict between folk practices and religious practices in a situation where one of the two parties gained unprecedented control of the judiciary. Thus, the context of the shifting events of contemporary folklife provides an explanation for the conflict that emerged. (Goodbeer 1994)

The final work I wish to note is Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. Published in 2002, Norton's work takes a broader

contextual view of the crisis, tying it specifically to the general social crisis of Indian Wars in the area. According to Norton, the late Seventeenth century was a time of general societal crisis, with conflicts such as King Philip's War providing a sense of insecurity to the Puritans and causing general social instability as they searched for meaning behind the conflict. Fundamentally, Norton's aim is less about providing a specific motivation and more about situating the hysteria into a context, providing a way of understanding how aspects such as the conflict over town minister had their roots in a larger ontological crisis for the Puritans (Norton 2002).

Thus, the historical discourse into which the various *historia* enter is one already marked by disagreement, both over conclusions and significant evidence. Different historians use different evidence to come to different conclusions in a way that leaves a distinct lack of consensus on the events of 1692. Into such a situation, the discursive materials presented in localized texts provide an interesting entrance into the subject, as they negotiate both the official narrative present in the historical literature and the material specifically significant to the local context.

Chapter 4-Performance as Strategic, Structural and Cultural

Performers are not passive, unreflecting creatures who simply respond to the dictates of tradition or the physical and social environment. They interpret both traditions and social settings, actively transforming both in the course of the performances.

-Charles Briggs



Two monument dedication ceremonies happened in Salem thirteen years, three blocks and a world apart.

On August 5, 1992, the Witch Trials memorial was dedicated, part of the tercentennial memorial commemorations. The crowd included numerous individuals from the city, including the members of the Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee and keynote speaker Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winner and Holocaust survivor. The event was solemn and civil, a tribute to history and a testament to survival, civic pride in the monument in sync with community sentiment

On June 15, 2005, the statue of Elizabeth Montgomery was dedicated, a marker of the filming of *Bewitched* in Salem, MA. The unveiling was well attended, but by two crowds rather than one. In one group stands the mayor and city officials with

people associated with the television show (Kasey Rogers and Erin Murphy and William Asher). In the other group, protesters stand with signs like “tragedy ≠ whimsy” “Elizabeth Who? Is she from Salem?” and “Is there no limit to the schlock and hype?” The event was chaotic and conflicted and featured a protester arrested by police, a far cry from the peace of the Memorial dedication.

While Bridget Bishop stands before her paying accusers, awaiting their judgment, many steps have happened to bring her to that point. The performance in which they all participate emerges from a set of circumstances that follow certain rules common to folklore. The performance is constructed according a set of cultural understandings that provide keys to interpretation, ways of understanding the potential inputs and outputs of such performances. Understanding the way in which *historia* texts function as folklore can help us understand both the cultural influences that help create *historia* texts and the ways in which *historia* function within a cultural context.

As the question was phrased earlier ‘Is the text a folkloric performance? That is, does it show characteristics of aesthetic communication through structured, culturally linked acts?’ The argument I make here is that the primary characteristics of folklore texts emerge in the patterns of folklore study over the years, showing the ways in which folklorists have viewed the folkloric process both from the level of cultural input and cultural output. By understanding the way in

which *historia* function as folklore, we can see how they influence the world around them and how they reflect the cultural context from which they emerge.

To apply a methodology based on folkloric performance to the Salem texts, we must examine the characteristics of folkloric performances. Generally speaking, folkloric methodology has outlined three salient characteristics of performances. First, they are culturally embedded, that is, they follow cultural patterns and are reflective of cultural identity. Second, they are structural, that is, they operate using complex societal frameworks and produce societal structures of meaning. Third, they are strategic, that is, there are intentionally selective characteristics of all performances that reveal their function and allow their study. By examining these specific characteristics, it is possible to see how a folkloristic model of performance can be used to reveal information about historical performatives and open a gateway to the examination of *historia* as a form of performative historical discourse.

Folklore as Culturally Embedded

First, how are folkloric performances culturally embedded? Folklorists over the years have approached this in several ways that reflect various dimensions of the relationship between culture and folklore. One of the key purposes behind folklore has been the use of a culture's creative work to understand a culture and this has emerged in several characteristics of folkloristics.

This can be seen best in two types of folkloric study. The first significant type is the deep folkloric ethnography, in which the folkloric performances of a people are

examined for cultural connections. Three notable examples of this sort of work are Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*, Linda Dégh's *Folktales and Society* and Henry Glassie's *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*. In each of these works, folkloric performance is shown to emerge from a cultural context, providing a useful tool for examining the culture's practices and mores.

An early work of folkloristic study, Zora Neale Hurston's *Of Mules and Men* was an early attempt at the examination of the folklore of African Americans in the Southeastern United States. The study, undertaken partially at the request of Hurston's professor Franz Boas, sought to present a better understanding of 'negro folk-lore⁵' through ethnographic study. Hurston's approach is interesting for several reasons that reveal her conception of the relationship between folklore and culture. First, Hurston's position as both cultural-insider and cultural-outsider provide insight into her understanding of the relationship between folklore and culture.

When I pitched headforemost into the world I landed in the crib of negroism. From the earliest rocking of my cradle, I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit is apt to cut and what the Squinch Owl says from the house top. But it was fitting me like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it. It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings, that I could see myself like somebody else and stand off and look at my garment. Then I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through at that. (Hurston 1969 [1935], 17)

⁵ I use the term negro folklore here for two reasons. First, Hurston herself uses the term frequently in her own work. Second, the term is common in early American folklore scholarship including the work of Richard Dorson and the foundational documents of the American Folklore Society.

Hurston's attitude here towards both the cultural importance of folklore takes a complex view of the interrelationship of folklore and culture. On the one hand, Hurston understands the way in which folklore serves as an important part of her own enculturation, however, she also expresses her belief that outside collection is important to cultural study. This is well expressed in another quote by Hurston,

Folk-lore is not as easy to collect as it sounds. The best source is where there are the least outside influences and these people, being usually under-privileged, are the shyest. They are most reluctant at times to reveal that which the soul lives by. (Hurston 1969 [1935], 18)

This quote expresses the attitude that Hurston takes toward scholarship. For Hurston, Anthropologists are trained in the identification of cultural forms. However, those cultural forms are held deep in cultural practices, requiring detailed examination and description for exegesis.

Fundamentally, the form of Hurston's narrative is itself a way of comprehending her conception of folklore as culturally embedded. In her ethnographic descriptions, folkloric performances emerge naturalistically from everyday life. Hurston's writing does not separate the folktales from the ethnographic description but instead is written as continuous narrative, exploring the ways in which Negro folklore is a part of a holistic picture of African American life.

Ultimately, Hurston is seeking to identify the characteristics of Negro culture through her examination. Hurston was writing during a period in which folkloristic study was seen as a key characteristic of cultural identity, whether on a national level such as the European nation epics or on a cultural level such as a

differentiated understanding of Native American tribal identity through folklore collection. Thus, Hurston in her collection is seeking to understand the ways in which African American culture functions through folklore. One of her clearest statements of this comes in her appendix description of Jack.

Jack or John (Not John Henry) is the great human culture hero in Negro folk-lore. He is like Daniel in Jewish folk-lore, the wish-fulfillment hero of the race. The one who, nevertheless, or in spite of laughter, usually defeats Ole Massa, God and the Devil. Even when Massa seems to have him in a hopeless dilemma he wins out by a trick. (Hurston 1969 [1935], 305)

This understanding of a folkloric hero as unique to a culture provides insight into Hurston's opinion of the nature of folklore as culturally embedded. Jack is a 'wish-fulfillment hero of the race' a manifestation of cultural desire in the form of a folkloric character.

This understanding of folklore as culturally embedded persists in folkloristics and resurfaces in the work of Linda Dégh. In her book *Folktales and Society*, Dégh outlines the ways in which a folkloric repertoire can be reflective of cultural identity in her examination of Szekeler culture in Hungary. Dégh's study focuses on a clear set of questions and a key area where she identifies the answers. "The key questions in folktale study are these: How was the tale shaped and how does its form originate? The search for answers focuses on the creative person, or, in a given case, the person at hand who passes on the tradition (Dégh 1989[1969], 46)" Thus, according to Dégh, the search for folktales leads to the examination of those who pass on creative traditions.

Dégh focuses her study on the relationship between the folkloric repertoire of the Szekeler community, the creative identity of the tale teller and the influence on community identity. As she puts it,

Three principal factors are equally essential to the existence of the folktale, and their interrelationship forms the core of our own research: (1) tradition, or the communal contribution of past bearers of tradition; (2) the present storytelling community; and (3) the narrator. Simultaneous interaction of these basic factors is essential for the creation of the folktale. (Dégh 1989[1969], 49)

To Dégh, cultural forms, such as the folktale, emerge from the dynamics of traditional culture and creative individuals. These forms are by their very nature culturally embedded, relying on cultural background as a key part of performance. To Dégh, culture perpetuates itself through performance and the title of her work is linked to that. To Dégh, one cannot separate folktales from society or society from folktales, cultural expression is the key to cultural understanding. Interestingly, Dégh's dynamics of tradition and individuality are presented as a limitation.

The traditional material fetters the creative individual. A group's common traditional stock of oral literature—which distinguishes it from other groups—usually manifests itself not in the creations but in communal knowledge. The average person knows the communal stock of folktales, the tale body; he may be able to narrate but he is not accustomed to doing so, and he is not able to perform fluently in public. The narrators choose from this communal and well-known material the parts they want to narrate and which the audience likes to hear over and over again, and which as a result become more and more polished. (Dégh 1989[1969], 50)

Ultimately, while Dégh's culture is a limited set of communal understanding, it also serves an important cultural function in linking people together. Folklore is

culturally embedded in that it is one of the ways in which individuals become linked to something larger than themselves in the form of communal knowledge.

The understanding of folklore as culturally embedded continues in the work *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* by Henry Glassie. Glassie's work is a holistic examination of the cultural life of the community of Ballymenone in Ireland.

Glassie is explicit in his goals for his examination.

Human Beings are defined neither by conditions nor by moments of escape. Wishing for frightening comparability, I want to see people as they are: free and stuck in the world. My interest is in the constant interplay of will and circumstance, so I care less about the rare celebration than about the daily round, and I care less about form than about content. I am concerned less with the structure of society than with the quality of social life, less with the economic system than with the nature of work, less with genres of literature than with the meaning in texts. I ask not how people fit into the plots of others but how they form their own lives, not what people do once in a while but what they do all the time (Glassie 1982, 15)

Glassie's formulation of his object of study is one based heavily on the idea of folklore as a part of a holistic understanding of cultural life. Glassie's work is focused not on the exceptional but on the everyday, not on the structural but on the interpersonal, not on the macro but on the micro.

This understanding of people's lives based on what they do brings into focus the idea that folkloric performance is deeply embedded in culture and is an important source of cultural meaning. As Glassie says in regards to the influence of context on performance, "Contexts are mental associations woven around texts during performance to shape and complete them, to give them meaning (Glassie 1982, 33)." To Glassie, cultural context is a form of cultural linkage, the way in

which individual texts are used to create cultural meaning. This process of contextualization is important to Glassie's understanding of meaning and culture, "Most crucially, meaning is that which joins people through things, transforming forms into values, values into forms (Glassie 1982, 33)."

This process, through which creative expression in the form of folklore serves as a process of cultural reinforcement is linked to Glassie's conception of folklore as a cultural product. More than other forms, the performance of folkloric texts is a form of cultural display, making manifest cultural values in practice. For Glassie, this requires a degree of cultural creativity.

Ceilis unify in the truth the speaker receives and gives, and true stories give the ceiliers a way to conceive of their existence. Tales of Saints lay the world's sacred foundations. Experiences explore its dim rim. Exploits, bids, and pants preserve the human traits essential to survival: courage and wit. Battle tales symbolize the community, showing how brave, smart people group themselves for victory and defeat in a world that has limits known to no one and a center in constant flux. (Glassie 1982, 70)

Thus, in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, the importance of the cultural linkage between creative expression and cultural understanding comes from the way in which such a linkage is a manifestation of cultural identity. In this way, Glassie parallels Hurston and Dégh. All of these studies present folkloric performance as a key to the deeper understanding of cultural identity, providing a more holistic image of cultural life than simple examination of superstructural forms. Understanding the way in which creativity and culture interact is thus an

important function of folkloristics and is thus one of the important salient features of folklore.

The second variety of culturally embedded folklore is the examination of emic motifs, patterns and functions within folklore as culturally indicative. In these studies, the specific cultural forms are outlined as revelatory of cultural identity. This is revealed in three studies, Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, Alan Dundes' "Thinking Ahead" and Hasan El-Shamy's *Tales Arab Women Tell*. These three studies all examine the culturally embedded functions of folklore through the examination of cultural peculiarities.

One example of this comes from Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp's formulation of the morphology of the Russian fairy tale. Propp's formulation, titled in English *Morphology of the Folktale*, is a methodology for understanding the way in which folktales from a given culture follow certain culturally determined patterns of plot, varying in specifics but following certain specific shapes. In a basic sense, Propp believes that cultural characteristics determine the shape of fairy tales.

The execution of a correct analysis of a tale is not always easy. A certain amount of experience and skill are required for this. It is true that many tales in the Russian collections can easily be decomposed. The job is complicated, however, by the fact that uncorrupted tale construction is peculiar only to the peasantry—to a peasantry, moreover, little touched by civilization. All kinds of foreign influences alter and sometimes even corrupt a tale. (Propp 1968, 100)

This statement on the tale provides an interesting insight into Propp's conception of folklore as culturally embedded. If the purest form of a folktale is in the most isolated people and the influence of outsiders can change the form of

folklore then said folklore needs to have some inherent cultural basis that can be identified.

While Propp's formulation presents a somewhat universal image, careful analysis of his methodology shows his general plan to create a morphology that was culturally specific for the comparison of different bodies of tale material.

Let us take one example. Among the variants of the tale 'Frau Holle,' Bolte and Políkva quote tale No. 102 from Afanás'ev (the well-known tale, 'Bába Jagá'). They also include a number of other Russian tales—even those in which the witch is replaced by mice or a dragon. But they do not include the tale 'Morózko.' Why not? For here we have the same expulsion of the stepdaughter and her return with gifts, the same sending of the real daughter and her punishment. Moreover, both 'Morózko' and 'Frau Holle' represent the personification of winter, even though in the German tale we have the personification in a female form, and in the Russian one, in a male form. (Propp 1968, 9)

In this example, Propp seeks to both link and distinguish the German tale 'Frau Holle' and the Russian tale 'Morózko'. In Propp's opinion, these two tales are similar, but not the same and this is significant in both cases. The similarity provides a case for comparison while the difference allows said comparison to take place. In short, Propp believes that cultural differences in fairy tales emerge most easily through the proper creation of parallelism. This theory is expanded later in Propp's work when he makes the case for his form of structural analysis.

If we are incapable of breaking the tale into its components, we will not be able to make a correct comparison. And if we do not know how to compare, then how can we throw light upon, for instance, Indo-Egyptian relationships, or upon the relationships of the Greek fable to the Indian, etc.? (Propp 1968, 15)

Thus, fundamentally, to Propp, the identification of the components of folklore is essentially an effort to allow comparison between different cultural forms of folklore. Propp's implication is that there are differences between Indian folklore and Egyptian Folklore, that the Greek fable takes a different form than the Indian fable, and that generally, two different cultures will produce different folkloric functions precisely because they are two different cultures.

A somewhat different example of the identification of cultural patterns comes from Alan Dundes' 1969 article "Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Futurist Orientation in American Worldview." Dundes' article takes the concept of American worldview and explores the way in which a 'futurist' pattern emerges in folk speech. Dundes' attitude towards the relationship between folklore and culture is self-described as holistic, based on the idea that cultural patterns emerge in cultural forms.

If one holds a holistic concept of culture and if one accepts the all pervasiveness of worldview within a given culture, then in theory one could begin anywhere, with any bit of cultural material, in the search for worldview. One could find clues to worldview in kinship data, grammar, child-rearing details, agricultural techniques, or any one of a thousand bits and pieces of culture. (Dundes, Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Future Orientation in American Worldview 1969, 69-70)

While Dundes believes that cultural material in general provides potential insight into cultural patterns, he identifies folkloric material as potentially more informative due to the nature of the connection between folkloric performance and the culture of the performer and audience. As Dundes puts it,

To the extent that folklore constitutes an autobiographical ethnography of a people, it provides an outsider, e.g., the visiting ethnographer, with a view of the culture from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in. Not only is folklore a people's own description of themselves and hence possibly less subject to the influence of the ethnographic reporter's unavoidable ethnocentric bias than other kinds of data, but it is frequently the case that in folklore implicit worldview principles and themes are made explicit. (Dundes, *Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Future Orientation in American Worldview* 1969, 70)

Dundes' study examines folkloric material in order to identify what he describes as a 'Futurist Orientation.' According to Dundes' findings, the prominence of folk speech patterns in the United States that indicate a positive attitude towards the future such as "the best is yet to come", "you ain't seen nothing yet" and "tomorrow is another day" are a manifestation of a broader phenomenon in American Worldview, specifically a positivist attitude towards the future. Dundes' argument follows a direct line of reasoning towards why such a study is valid. "If folklore does in fact provide a concrete form in which implicit worldview is often made explicit, and if American worldview includes a future orientation, then one would expect to find that orientation expressed in American folklore. (Dundes, *Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Future Orientation in American Worldview* 1969, 70)" Thus, Dundes puts it literally, if a pattern exists in culture, and if folklore expresses culture, then such patterns should emerge in folklore. According to this, similar to the ideas expressed in Propp, folkloric performance draws on cultural forms for its creation and is thus usable to study the culture involved. While Dundes takes this study further in books such as *Life is Like a*

Chicken Coop Ladder and *Two Tales of Crow and Sparrow*, theorizing reductive, essentialized cultural narratives of Germany and India respectively, his work does show a centralized theme in folkloric study, that folklore reflects worldview.

A recent example of this kind of study comes from Hasan El-Shamy in his book *Tales Arab Women Tell and the Behavioral Patterns They Portray*. El-Shamy's examination takes the position that the folklore performed by a given group can be used to examine said group using techniques of tale-type and motif analysis. El-Shamy has a particular outlook towards social categories as cultural manifestations, understanding social categories according to internal patterns of behavior and division.

A certain social category of a population is distinguishable from another by characteristic behavioral patterns and mannerisms ascribed to its members. Inclusion or membership in a social category is reckoned in terms of age, gender, profession, and other significant factors, and is essentially a perceptual process of stereotyping. (El-Shamy 1999, 9)

According to El-Shamy's methodology, the tales told within these social categories, such as gender, allow the study of the internal subcultures. Understanding the way in which the titular Arab Women choose tales allows an understanding of internal social behavior. El-Shamy identifies the choice from within tale repertoire as part of a process of creating a body of folklore—categorized by the folklorist—that reveals cultural roles and forms.

The occurrence of an item of lore during the course of daily living, through being elicited by a tradition bearer, is viewed and treated as a cognitive response to specific cognitively perceived motivations in given contexts. The performance of the item is tied in part to the multiple

social roles an individual must play within the context of communal norms and other regulators of individual and group behavior. Action with reference to these regulators constitutes the attitudes and social processes characteristic of the community and its culture. (El-Shamy 1999, 8)

Fundamentally, El-Shamy presents folkloric materials as linked strongly to an individual's relation to their cultural life. Folklore is both a primary instrument of enculturation, teaching an individual the rules and patterns of social life, and also a major key to social interactions, serving as an emic marker of social role and communal norms of behavior. This is most fully articulated in El-Shamy's outline of the relationship between cultural folklore and an individual's 'life space'.

Thus, lore and other early experiences governed by traditions may be viewed as major factors in an individual's 'life space[El-Shamy's term for the perceived world]' and as lasting building blocks in that individual's cognitive system and 'worldview'...Similarly, through experiencing folk and other sorts of traditions, an individual develops multiple cognitions vis-à-vis a single object or act in accordance with the various referents to which that object or act is linked...This quality may be labeled 'multiplexity' of cognitive connotations. These connotations are part of an individual's 'life space' and constitute shared symbolic systems among members of a social group. (El-Shamy 1999, 7)

Thus, in the end, the body of lore is part of a broader cultural pattern and is one of the most important ways in which the individual connects to the broader culture. By examining the sets of tales and traditions an individual learns and uses culturally, the folklorist can observe a symbolic system which represents a given culture. In other words, the performance of given tale-types and motifs identified in

the book can represent internal cultural choices which reveal the most important aspects of a group's identity as a whole or a part.

In each of these three studies, patterns of folklore, that is the broader relationship between tales, reveal patterns of culture. According to each of these studies, common elements of folkloric materials reveal cultural patterns for folkloric study, either within a group or as a form of cross-cultural comparison. What is most interesting about this is that while the first set of culturally embedded folklore materials take an approach more based on the way in which studying the folk reveals the lore, the second set reveal the way in which studying the lore reveals the folk. This level of connection is significant to the approach of folkloristics to folkloric performance as culturally embedded.

Altogether, these studies reveal the way in which culture and folklore are seen as intertwined. Folklore produces and reveals culture in ways that folklorists have argued over the years. This cultural influence is revealed in more depth through the examination of structure in folkloric narrative.

Folklore as Structural

In order to understand the way in which folkloric performers and audiences utilize formal characteristics for production and interpretation, we must examine the ways in which folkloric performances are structural. The performance of folkloric texts can be described using a perspective of 'structure in—structure out', both influenced by and influencing cultural categories. By examining the ways in which structural input authorizes texts and the way in which the performance of

folkloric texts creates ontological categories through structural output, an understanding of the relationship between structure and narrative can be more fully explored and the ways in which *historia* texts can deal with larger concepts can be realized.

The most important manifestation of input structure is the narrative frame, the concept that a narrative includes within it rules for interpretation. Outlined by Gregory Bateson, “a frame is metacommunicative. Any message, which either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame, *ipso facto* gives the receiver instructions or aids in his attempt to understand the messages within the frame. (Bateson 1972, 188)” Bateson’s narrative frame operates in multiple dimensions in folkloric narratives. One of the most important ways in which the narrative frame operates is the way in which the frame functions as an authorizer of performance.

An example of this sort of metacommunicative frame can be seen in the distinction between critical and jocular anecdotes. A story about a co-worker’s misdirected naughty e-mail can function as either a humorous anecdote or a critical anecdote often without changes in narrative content based on the style of presentation. Presented in an anonymous complaint box, the text of the anecdote would be read as critical, told as part of a retirement party for the individual, the text of the anecdote would be heard as humorous. This difference in interpretation is not based on the text of the narrative, but on the metacommunicative context. Interestingly, the narrative frame can give information on how a story may be used, as well. A humorous anecdote is not presented as a reason for professional

chastisement; a critical anecdote demands such a function. Fundamentally, the narrative frame operates as a series of rules that influence production and dictate the way in which a performance is interpreted.

This has interesting parallels in J.L. Austin's formulation of performatives, social acts which achieve social ends. Austin's theory of performance is fundamentally about explicit social functions, but many of his requirements for the proper functioning of a performative have parallels in folkloric performance.

Suppose we try first to state schematically...some at least of the things which are necessary for the smooth or 'happy' functioning of a performative...

(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances and further,

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely.

(Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

(Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. (Austin 1975, 15)

Many of these requirements have specific parallels in folkloric performance, with similar requirements occurring in the narrative framing of a given performance. For instance, characteristics A.1 and A.2 can both be seen as requiring the use of generic textual cues within the performance of a given tale,

such as the use of genre based opening formulae or authorization. For instance, an urban legend in the United States frequently requires an authorizing framework that places the story within the realm of believable through potential verifiability, the notable Friend-of-a-Friend formula. Similarly, the telling of a fairy tale requires the use of opening phrases such as “Once Upon a Time” or “Long Ago and Far Away”. This sort of requirement can be more explicitly manifest in narrative such as the requirement among the Navajo that Coyote stories be told in the Winter, a requirement that brought up significant problems in archiving recordings of said stories due to lack of harmony between cultural strictures and archival procedures.

Fundamentally, this form of authorization of performance is seen as a way of evaluating the validity of performances according to various cultural rules. Austin outlines the nature of failure of performance in his work.

When the utterance is a misfire[A or B failure], the procedure which we purport to invoke is disallowed or is botched: and our act...is void and without effect, &c....On the other hand, in the Γ cases, we speak of our infelicitous act as ‘professed’ or ‘hollow’ rather than ‘purported’ or ‘empty’, and as not implemented, or not consummated rather than as void or without effect. (Austin 1975, 16)

While few folkloric performances are seen as being given in bad faith, a parallel exists here as well. A performance that does not properly follow the cultural rules of the narrative frame is frequently seen as a failed performance, one that lacks the ability to achieve social functions. If the person is not the correct person to perform the tale, perhaps not having the cultural authority to perform,

whether explicitly granted (a shaman or other folkloric expert) or implicitly evaluated (a docent or amateur expert), their performance would be invalid in the eyes of the audience.

What this indicates is the important social consequences of folkloric narrative. Folkloric narratives delineate social reality through structure. As an example, a performance of the legend of George Washington and the Cherry Tree by a history teacher in an elementary school classroom on Washington's Birthday grants the legend a degree of legitimacy by subscribing to narrative frame aspects of style, performer authority and proper occasion. In a way similar to Milton Singer's outline of cultural performances, the application of societal rules to a narrative grants it societal power (Singer 1972, 70-75). By subscribing to these rules, narratives can be used by performers to negotiate ontological structures of culture. As Richard Bauman says "From this perspective, insofar as performance is conceived of as communicative interaction, one would expect aspects of the social structure of the interaction to be emergent from the interaction itself, as in any other such situation. (Bauman 1977, 43)"

To summarize the prior example as a prelude to further theorizing, a young George Washington, with youthful abandon, chops down a cherry tree. When confronted by his father as to who chopped down the tree, the young Washington owned up to his action, claiming "I cannot tell a lie." The story, publicized by Mason Locke Weems, has been generally acknowledged as lacking historical basis, but the narrative itself does deal with certain cultural structures. By outlining an

important character trait of the first president of the United States as a penchant for honesty in the face of consequences, an important cultural distinction is drawn between truth and consequences in American culture. The narrative seeks to influence the understanding of the world as being a place where a binary opposition of truth and consequences manifests as a moral question that must be confronted.

This provides a basic example of the structural output of narratives. While narratives have many functions—aesthetic, pedagogic, amusing—the most important for this examination involves emergent structural negotiation, the variable presentation of beliefs on the structural function of the world, whether on the scale of gardens and apples or on the scale of Gardens and Apples. This type of output has been discussed extensively by French scholar Claude Lévi-Strauss.

In his books *Totemism* and *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss outlines a theory of cultural ontological negotiation known as mythic thought. Based heavily on the metaphorical use of the term bricolage, mythic thought is presented as a form of cultural negotiation in which the bricoleur uses the cultural tools available.

The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogenous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual 'bricolage'—which explains the relation which can be perceived between the two. (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 17)

According to this argument, the process of myth is one in which a limited set of tools, specifically cultural forms such as myths, is used to negotiate cultural structures. Lévi-Strauss recognizes in this a characteristic method which uses

myth to create cultural structured sets, organized systems of meaning erected in relationship to each other. “The characteristic feature of mythic thought, as of ‘bricolage’ on the practical plane, is that it builds up structured sets, not directly with other structured sets but by using the remains and debris of events. (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 21-22)” This method of cultural creation helps develop the understanding the nature of the structural output of folklore.

Lévi-Strauss seeks to explore the ways in which bricolage occurs through the use of a culture’s internal set of materials, the way in which cultural forms are used to both disassemble the broader structures of culture and then negotiate the meanings within as a set of cultural structures. In these studies, Lévi-Strauss tends to indentify binary structures of meaning, which he points to as fundamental to culture. However, the key to mythic thought is not linked directly to form of output so much as to existence of output. As Lévi-Strauss puts it, “Rites and myths, on the other hand, like ‘bricolage’...take to pieces and reconstruct sets of events...and use them as so many indestructible pieces for structural patterns in which they serve alternatively as ends or means. (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 32-33)” Thus, according to this theory of mythic thought, cultural structures emerge through culturally embedded forms such as rites and myths, an idea that can be extended more generally.

Levi-Strauss’ view of mythic thought is a specific approach to a general phenomenon. Narratives internally delineate reality, whether through the complexities of internecine rivalries in Scottish legend or the simple difference

between day and night in the tale of Raven stealing the sun. In each case, this process is partially governed by the human desire to categorize, through which people erect ontological structures such as alive/dead or group member/non-member. These structures emerge from narratives and involve various levels of complexity.

Thus, folkloric narratives are both influenced by structure in their creation and influence structure through their performance. Folkloric performances, by using culturally embedded structures create tools for interpretation on the part of the audience while at the same time outlining the interpretable results. One of the important aspects to this characteristic emerges in the level of strategic manifestation of identity and expression at the core of folkloristics.

Folklore as Strategic

While we may talk of structures and cultural linkages, a vital characteristic to folkloristic study is the idea of strategic deployment of folklore. Folklore does not merely emerge on its own but it used by people with agendas. One of the key aspects of folkloric performance involves the agency of the performers. This can be seen through examinations of core definitions of folklore outlined by Dan Ben-Amos and Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter and sheds light on the relationship between the form of folklore and its function.

Dan Ben-Amos' definition of folklore, "artistic communication in small groups (Ben-Amos, *Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context* 1972, 13)" is a vital one to understanding the function of folkloric performance. The primary aspect of this

definition pertinent to the strategic nature of folkloric performance involves ideas of communication. Communication is key to Ben-Amos' definition. He says "The Telling is the tale; therefore the narrator, his story, and his audience are all related to each other as components of a single continuum, which is the communicative event (Ben-Amos, *Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context* 1972, 10)" and "In its cultural context, folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process—a communicative process, to be exact (Ben-Amos, *Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context* 1972, 9)". Ben-Amos' conception of folklore as a communicative process puts folklore in the hands, or more frequently the mouth, of the communicator. While the communication may occur within small groups, the communicative process requires transmission from narrator to audience and involves a choice on the narrator's part.

This aspect is heightened in combination with Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter's concept of folklore from *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*. Seeking to understand the way in which folklore exists in the modern world, Dundes and Pagter theorize two main linked characteristics of folklore: multiple existence and variation. This concept, built on the prevailing attitudes of folklorists attempts to refine what counts as traditional material and thus examinable using folkloric tools. "They are traditional insofar as they manifest 'multiple existence,' one of the principal characteristics of a folklore form. These items exist in multiple versions and in more than one time or place—just as all folklore does. A poem written by a poet or a song written by a composer is not a folk poem or folksong unless or until it

exists in at least two or more places (Dundes and Pagter, *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* 1975, xix).” These linked characteristics—that a form can exist in multiple places and versions—apply a certain version of agency to folkloric performance through implication, an agency that moves between repetition and innovation.

This agency could be theorized thus. If there exist between multiple texts both similarity and difference, enough similarity to call two texts the same but enough difference to call them different, then each performance involves a negotiation between this contiguity and variability. This first choice establishes a discursive context, invoking prior and subsequent performances to establish continuity. The second choice negotiates individual discursive meaning through the manifestation of agency.

In other words, by performing a version of a text, one makes choices regarding the individual text that are significant to the examination of contextual discourse and the negotiation of situational meaning. By making choices in the performance of a given text, a performer performs an act of referential communication, establishing a context of both tradition and innovation by making choices. Charles Briggs presents this idea similarly; “Performers are not passive, unreflecting creatures who simply respond to the dictates of tradition or the physical and social environment. They interpret both traditions and social settings, actively transforming both in the course of the performances (Briggs, *Competence in Performance* 1988, 7).”

That is to say that the contextual information of a folkloric text is tied directly to its performance through multiple existence and variation as a form of cultural communication. As folklore is communication, there is a degree of discursive negotiation—which implies agency—conducted through the dimensions of multiple existence and variation—which provides a mechanism for referential negotiation—establishing parallelism and/or distinction between the present situation and past situations. These negotiations are strategic because communication as an act negotiates multiple dimensions of reality and because this negotiation occurs through characteristics of folkloric narrative as a form which require agency on the part of the performer. Essentially, this method allows the examination of performances as reflective of the identity of the performer through strategic choices made within performance.

Historia as Folklore

So, folkloric performance is culturally embedded, in that it is a significant point of cultural expression, structural, in that it both draws on emic structures to negotiate its performance and produces ontological structures through discourse and strategic, in that a given text requires significant performative agency on the part of cultural actors. In combination, folkloric performance—and to some degree all strategic, structural, culturally embedded performance—can be seen as a method of communication through which culturally embedded actors discursively negotiate ontological structures. Folkloric performance is a performative locus in

which social concepts are established and re-established within a group. Charles Briggs presents this idea thus

‘When one moves from theoretical models to situated narrative practices, it is clear that the manner in which stories are presented and used is often contingent upon their being framed as embodiments of shared beliefs and understandings. Recent studies of discourse have come to view such claims as situated social constructs; that is, such framings enter into strategies by which individuals and groups attempt to lend legitimacy or even hegemony to particular narratives. This statement captures important dimensions of the role of storytelling in the creation of social life from the smallest to the most inclusive social formations (Briggs, *Disorderly Discourse: Narrative, Conflict & Inequality* 1996, 14).

In short, the format of folklore performance can have real social consequences. This is important to the understanding of the way in which *historia* function as folkloric performances. The characteristics of *historia* as folkloric performances mean that these texts both must follow the rules of folkloric performances, but also that they can have the consequences of folkloric performances.

Historia performances show all three of the characteristics noted here in ways that influence the way in which we can look at them. The culturally embedded nature of the *historia* emerges primarily by the way in which each narrative attempts to engage in the historical discourse as a form of cultural context. For *historia* narratives, the localized historical discourse represented in the previous chapter is a form of engaging with cultural context, of emerging from a cultural background. The strategic communicative characteristics of *historia* are represented by claims of authority. An implicit characteristic of claims of authority

in narrative is that such authority implies necessity of communication.

Interestingly, a reverse implication is present in *historia* claims of authority as well, the potential strategic engagement of the audience, implying that both production and reception of information can be done in a strategic fashion, with the choice of received performance as a potential manifestation of agency.

The primary salient characteristic of folkloric narrative that emerges in *historia* texts is the structural. *Historia* use structural formations in order to negotiate generalized structures of identity. By using the structural input of the embedded historical narrative, *historia* present an argument about ontological structures of American justice. By presenting a narrative that discusses specific concepts within a specific context, the Salem texts imply a structural relationship between the past of Salem and the present of America, allowing a negotiation of the contrasts between. But, these negotiations exist themselves within a context of American identity negotiation that is based on certain trajectories of American historical narrative as revelatory of American national character.

Chapter 5-Telling the National Story

Thus the legitimate object of the study of nationalism ought to include more than overtly national movements; the scope must be broadened so as to include nation-views and other narratives of the nation. In today's America, for example, the voices of various collectivities tell us how differently or contradictorily they imagine their Americanness. These are the voices not only of different ethnicities—the various groups of blacks, Jews, Asians, Hispanics—but of subgroups or minorities—women, gays, religious pacifists—who in seeking to reconcile their own identity with Americanness often pose a powerful challenge to hegemonic nationalism.

–Prasenjit Duara



In Salem, a long standing national narrative is reversed in a single Church sign.

Saint Peters Episcopal Church in Salem, founded by Philip English—accused witch

and wealthy merchant—with the money he got ransoming the dead body of Sheriff Corwin back to Corwin’s relatives, displays in front of it a sign celebrating 275 years of ministry, declaring itself “A House of Prayer for ALL people”. Such a narrative told just north of the Massachusetts Bay flips around the popular story of the Puritans. Here, it is the Puritans who imposed religious domination on the populace. Here it is the Anglican Communion who offered freedom of practice and salvation, the traditional pilgrim no longer the archetype of religious freedom, but the cruel theocratic oppressor, all alluded to in a single banner before the church.

Narratives of Americanness permeate American culture. Politicians talk about visiting ‘the real America,’ holiday broadcasts of movies are hailed as ‘an American tradition,’ citizens who engage in charitable work are hailed as ‘American heroes.’ Throughout the country, people talk about Americanness as an observable characteristic, one that can be evaluated in people, places and things. The *historia* of Salem such as the trial of Bridget Bishop are themselves narratives of national identity and what it means to be an American. In a way, Bishop’s trial is a trial of the U.S. judicial system and its participants in a way that highlights the nature of the performers as American.

At the same time, such labels rarely take account of themselves as narratives. This problem of identity exists across all spectra; Judith Butler identifies the problem in terms of gender identity. “Identity generally fails to take account of itself as a narrative. Subject to the feminist aim to delimit and define a

shared femininity, these narratives attempt to construct a coherent female subject (Butler, *Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory and Psychoanalytic Discourse* 2003, 205).” The idea of narrative as productive of identity is essential to the allegorical characteristic of the *historia*, but before such a narrative can be viewed as reflective of American character, some academic roadblocks stand in the way.

While American character studies was a foundational concept in the discipline of American Studies, such studies are viewed with suspicion today, with scholars questioning both motives and results of such studies. In her presidential address to the American Studies Association in 2004, Shelley Fisher Fishkin said “most Americanists in the United States today reject celebratory narratives of American exceptionalism and nationalism, viewing earlier proponents of them as blinkered and benighted (Fishkin 2005, 36).” Such narratives present an America that is unified, unbroken, a grand narrative that encompasses all without variation, excludes those who deviate from a pattern and lays claim to a unique history with a singular cause. While the conclusions to such narratives deserve to be abandoned to a scholarly graveyard, the questions asked have been abandoned based on a faulty teleological assumption, that the end result of asking such questions must be the same as before.

In the late 90’s a group of prominent American Studies scholars gathered to examine this question.

By the mid 1980’s the ASA—as evidenced by the articles published in *American Quarterly*, its convention programs and the diversity of its national council and officers—embraced a multicultural view of the American Studies project. But the questions remained how the new

American Studies would find a distinctive, interdisciplinary, scholarly and teaching role for the specialty without slipping again into a rhetoric that privileged national identity. How could the new American Studies take “nation,” “nationality,” and “nationalism” as phenomena that are simultaneously fictional and real? (Curiel, Kazanjian, et al. 2000)

When these scholars answered these questions by turning to a post-nationalist perspective, they abandoned the question of national identity emerging in textual form. But different approaches to the study of identity and history supply new chances to ask the same questions. By examining the question of the way in which history produces identity using a tool like *historia*, it is possible to see how a discursive pattern emerges, with neither history nor identity maintaining fixed status, but the interrelationship being demonstrated. To do this, we must first examine some of the more compelling narratives of American Character—from Frederick Jackson Turner, Henry Nash Smith and Richard Mercer Dorson—to glean their intent, examine their faults and take the lessons learned. From there, we examine the ways in which a contemporary conception of national identity can be adapted for use in relationship to the performance of *historia* in order to better understand the ways in which simple narratives on the lives of a few hundred Massachusetts Puritans can outline a deep current in American identity that aims to account for an important dimension of American identity.

Frederick Jackson Turner

Frederick Jackson Turner was an Americanist scholar with one answer: the Frontier. In his examinations of the history of the United States, from the position of the turn of the Twentieth century, Turner identified what, to him, was a key

common factor between American historical periods. That is, when examining the development of the United States from 1492-1900, he saw the relationship between the 'civilized' areas and the 'uncivilized' areas as a key societal tension that drove forward American history and defined American civilization. This theory has its strengths and weaknesses.

To expand on Turner's theory using his own words is not hard. Turner outlined his theories explicitly in one of his key works, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," an address given to the Wisconsin historical society in 1894. As he puts it,

Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development. Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs into life, and shape them to meet changing conditions. (Turner 1997[1894], 2-3)

Turner expands on this idea, the way in which all aspects of American life from the origins of the government to contemporary institutions are based on the existence of a frontier. Turner believes that the nature of this influence is based on a repeated process that occurs on the frontier.

American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier, this perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. (Turner 1997[1894], 3)

To Turner, there is nothing in United States history that is more important than the existence of the frontier. Even other things within American culture that Turner recognizes as important are only important because of their relationship, direct or indirect, to this frontier. Take for example,

The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West. Even the slavery struggle which is made so exclusive an object of attention by writers like Professor von Holst occupies its important place in American history because of its relation to westward expansion. (Turner 1997[1894], 3)

Turner's position that the slavery struggle is important because of its relation to westward expansion is interesting. Fundamentally, one of the key causes of the American Civil War was the question of the expansion of slavery into Western states and the political tensions caused by this process. This reveals a key aspect of Turner's orientation—one of Fishkin's 'celebratory narratives of American exceptionalism and nationalism'—the concept that the United States is a distinct case in history, somehow distinct from the history of Europe. In short, American Exceptionalism gestures towards a fundamental break between Europe and the US, seeing not a genealogical inheritance but a full paradigm shift. America is the 'City on a Hill' of John Winthrop, a place apart from its historical roots, an advancing, futurist nation.

Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines. And to study this advance, the men who grew up under these conditions and the political, economic and social results of it, is to study the really American part of our history. (Turner 1997[1894], 4)

Fundamentally, Turner's theory is that American identity comes from a complex set of historical changes based on the existence of politically empty space. Turner argues that Americans are different than other people because of the differences in their history. This argument has several strengths and weaknesses worth examining.

First, how was Turner wrong? Turner assumed frontier as *prima facie*, the most important cause to the exclusion of other causes. While it would be difficult to separate the frontier out of American civilization, American history up to 1900 has a number of equally important factors that show considerable cultural influence. Three clear examples of this are Industrialization, the slave trade and the residual cultural conflict of the English Civil War.

Industrialization redefined the American experience in very specific ways. The demand for an extensive, centralized labor force drove urbanization and immigration, centralizing large, multicultural communities in the US around major rivers and ports for purposes of shipping as well as driving the creation and refinement of transportation systems for the movement of goods and the exploitation of natural resources. This shift is present to some degree from early in the English colonial period, driving multiple aspects of American culture.

The slave trade, as pointed out in the seminal *Black Atlantic*, created the United States and the Atlantic world as a hybridized culture with deep seated cultural tensions. The resulting hybridization of West Indian and American culture resulted in distinct cultural forms and the deep seated cultural tensions first drove

the compromised initial government of the United States and then resulted in a drawn out conflict over the status of African American residents of the United States that continues through the present. While Turner's work in some way existed to refute the conceptions of slavery as the prime cause of American exceptionalism, it can still be seen as a potential *prima facie*.

The conflict of the English Civil War could be seen as a driving force of cultural conflict in the United States. The underlying conflict over religious life that erupted into conflict drove multiple waves of migration to the United States and established a cultural divide between the Puritans in the North and the Royalists in the South. These differences in ideology emerged in American political discourse. The constitutional debate over federalism, the conflict over slavery and modern debates over the centralized power of government have roots in this dispute.

This is not to say that Industrialization, the Slave Trade or the English Civil War should replace the frontier as the core cause, but to point out the heuristic nature of Turner's study. When everything is examined for its relation to the frontier, everything is seen based on its relationship to the frontier. While Turner's thesis also had problems of ethnocentrism in its formulation, ignoring the experience of most immigrant groups and especially that of Native Americans, those critiques do not get to the heart of the flaw, that there is no prime cause of American history, regardless of cultural sensitivity. In other words, Turner could

very easily incorporate immigrant and indigenous experiences and still be fundamentally wrong about the development of America.

Second, how was Turner right? Turner's formulation, while limited, does reveal certain aspects of the persistent cultural influence of American history. By examining Turner's frontier theory, one sees the ways that aspects of American history serve as key markers of present or contemporary identity. To completely do away with Turner would be to deny the influence of the past of the present, to say that present conditions exist without reference to prior conditions. Instead, recognition of the basic underlying principle, that historical events have a degree of influence over the way Americans view their present, allows the baby to be kept despite the necessary discarding of bathwater. American Studies should be concerned with historical contiguity not as an objective influence, but as a degree of performative authority. The link to history is more interpretive than Turner allows for, but he is right to say that we must be mindful of history. Warren Susman speaks to the importance of this in his article "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of the Usable Past,"

The idea of history itself, special kinds of historical studies and various attitudes toward history always play—whether intelligently conceived or not—a major role within a culture. That strange collection of assumptions, attitudes, and ideas we have come to call a "world view" always contains a more or less specific view of the nature of history. Attitudes toward the past frequently become facts of profound consequence for the culture itself. (Susman 1964, 243)

Henry Nash Smith

Henry Nash Smith was himself heavily influenced by Turner, but took a different approach to American history. Smith's attempts to develop a methodology for American Studies, best represented in his essay "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?" and his book *Virgin Land*, resulted in the development of the myth-symbol school of American Studies. In short, Smith says that persistent symbols such as the frontiersman and the open farmland serve the function of American myth, defining origin and reality of background. This theory essentially posits narratives of early America as equivalent to mythic narratives in oral cultures, a narrative about the structure of the world.

In general, Smith has as his aim the formulation of a general concept of American Studies. He lays his aims out explicitly in his article on methodology. "By 'American Studies' I shall mean 'the study of American culture, past and present, as a whole' and by 'culture' I shall mean 'the way in which subjective experience is organized. (Smith, Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method? 1957, 197)" This concept—that American Studies is the study of the way in which American subjective experience is organized through cultural symbols—runs through Smith's work and informs his own understanding of his academic mission.

In *The Virgin Land*, Smith undertakes the mission to answer fundamental questions about American history and identity. Generally, Smith is seeking an internal essence to American culture, a way of identifying the key symbols at the

heart of the American experience. As he says in the opening of the book, he seeks to solve an eternal problem of America,

What is an American? Asked St. John de Crèvecoeur before the Revolution, and the question has been repeated by every generation from his time to ours. Poets and novelists, historians and statesmen have undertaken to answer it, but the varying national self-consciousness they have tried to capture always escapes final statement. (Smith, *The Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* 1950, 3)

Smith's answer to this problem is to take a sequential understanding of the symbolic presentation of America, looking at three different ways in which the West has been symbolized as characteristic of America. The first of these he outlines in his chapter "Passage to India"

The importance of the Lewis and Clark expedition lay on the level of imagination: it was drama, it was the enactment of a myth that embodied the future. It gave tangible substance to what had merely been an idea, and established the image of a highway across the continent so firmly in the minds of Americans that repeated failures could not shake it. (Smith, *The Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* 1950, 17)

In this chapter, Smith focuses on the way in which the American west has been used as symbolic shorthand for commercial connection between Europe and Asia. According to Smith, the use of symbolic representations of westward movement and American identity such as the mass identity professed in Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself", presented in relation to a singular selfhood "I am large, I contain multitudes," and a collective sense of property "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you," gesture towards the idea of Manifest Destiny, a

unified future and collective ownership of the land for the American people. This first symbolic manifestation is very much the representation of the 18th and early 19th century, the early American image that carried British settlers across the Appalachians and drove Lewis and Clark to seek westward.

Smith's second symbolic representation of America draws on the image of the independent pioneer as a key symbol of America. Building heavily on the legend of Daniel Boone, the image of the frontiersman took shape. "By the side of Boone the empire builder and philanthropist, the anonymous popular mind had meanwhile created an entirely different hero, a fugitive from civilization who could not endure the encroachment of settlements upon his beloved wilderness. (Smith, *The Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* 1950, 54)" This symbol is one of the more complex that Smith analyzes, seeing the inherent contradictions contained within the character of Leatherstocking, the hero of numerous Western tales from the 19th century.

The profundity of the symbol of Leatherstocking springs from the fact that Cooper displays a genuine ambivalence toward all these issues, although in every case his strongest commitment is to the forces of order. The social compact, with all its consequences, is vividly and freshly realized, as it had to be realized with every new community planted in the wilderness. And all the aspects of authority— institutional stability, organized religion, class stratification, property—are exhibited as radiating from the symbol of the father. But if the father rules, and rules justly, it is still true that in this remembered world of his childhood Cooper figures as the son. Thus he is able to impart real energy to the statement of the case for defiance and revolt. (Smith, *The Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* 1950, 62)

Smith's Leatherstocking is the basic symbolic representation of the divide between civilization and wilderness at the heart of American culture. The myth at the heart of the "Sons of Leatherstocking" chapter is one of a culture driven by civilized men dragging civilization into the West, the crucible from which American culture emerges. Smith sees in the heroes of these Western narratives—both fictional and historical—a symbol of America itself, the hero of a civilization vs. wilderness tale.

Smith's final important symbol is explored in his chapter "The Garden of the World." The last chronologically of Smith's symbols, this chapter deals with the formation of communities devoted to the exploitation of the natural resources of this unsettled continent.

Although it was endlessly exciting for nineteenth-century Americans to contemplate the pioneer army moving westward at the command of destiny, and the Sons of Leatherstocking performing their improbable exploits in the wilderness, these themes had only an indirect bearing upon the major trends of economic and social development in American society. The forces which were to control the future did not originate in the picturesque Wild West beyond the agricultural frontier, but in the domesticated West that lay behind it. (Smith, *The Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* 1950, 123)

This symbol of the domesticated West is the most contemporary of Smith's images. According to Smith, the symbolic promise of a new communitarian life in the American West served as a key symbol of American history. The idea of the nascent community in the new Eden of the west gave Americans a new idea of their origins and developments.

With each surge of westward movement, a new community came into being. These communities devoted themselves not to marching onward, but to cultivating the earth. They plowed the virgin land and put in crops, and the great Interior Valley was transformed into a garden: for the imagination, the Garden of the World. The image of this vast and constantly growing agricultural society in the interior of the continent became one of the dominant symbols of nineteenth-century American society—a collective representation, a poetic idea (as Tocqueville noted in the early 1830's) that defined the promise of American life. (Smith, *The Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* 1950, 124)

While Smith sees this as the most contemporary of the symbols, he fundamentally presents the American west as America's history. To Smith, the American west, or the symbolic representation thereof, is the key to understanding American civilization. To return to his definition of American Studies, Smith would say that the changing symbol of the American west is the way of understanding the organization of subjective experience that is culture.

So, how was Henry Nash Smith wrong? Smith fell into some of the same traps as Turner by assuming a single myth or finite series of myths that define American culture. Smith's symbols at the heart of his myths are static in their meaning to a specific set of society, not accounting for negotiated meanings. The image of the western hero is one that has undergone deep amounts of negotiation since Smith's day, from sources such as Native American humor as collected in Keith Basso's *Portraits of "the Whiteman"* or mass media productions such as *Deadwood* and *Dances with Wolves*. In each case, the idea of a singular narrative of America or even a singular interpretation of a symbol is disputed; the multicultural nature of America allowing for a broad mosaic of interpretation.

Also, Smith's analysis of 'mythic' texts lacks nuance. By studying primarily dime novels and other works of literature, that is, static, formulaic texts, Smith limits himself to a very small amount of potential variation, seeing only a well tested form of selective media, defined more by market forces than historical meaning in everyday life. By limiting himself to such static texts, Smith does not see the degree to which historical symbolism is negotiated in everyday life in a way closer to the mythic process in oral cultures.

Finally, Smith seems to identify these symbols as historically sequential, leaning towards the conclusion of one symbol before the beginning of another. This representation, while a crucial part of Smith's analysis, is fundamentally limited. For instance, the developed idea of the Panama Canal as part of American identity definitely extends past the Leatherstocking period, but could be more easily classified as part of the Passage to India period. By trying to represent the country sequentially rather than simply as a series of themes, Smith misses potential analytical possibilities.

So, how is Smith right? The key aspect of Smith's methodology that improves heavily on other methods is that of symbolism. History to Smith is made important through communication, not simply as an objective force of influence. Smith's focus on American history as influential based on communication takes an important step towards history as a product of discourse. While not far enough in his examinations, Smith's focus on the importance of history being based on symbolic representation is key to an understanding of history as discourse.

Fundamentally, Smith takes a longer view of the influence of history. Rather than presenting history as directly influential, as Turner does, Smith realizes that history emerges in symbols in a way directly tied to the concept of history as representational narrative. While he turns to excessively formulaic texts to explore this representation, it is that limitation, not the aim towards representational history that leads Smith down the wrong path.

Richard Mercer Dorson

Richard M. Dorson's work on American Folklore can be seen as a response to Henry Nash Smith's methodology. Dorson sought the folkloric source of American character not in literature, but in localized folkloric performance, trying to get closer to the source of American character in the culture of the people. Through these sources, Dorson sought to identify folklore that responds to the unique historical circumstances of the United States. While he attempts to outline this model in several ways over the years, each attempt approaches the problem from a slightly different direction, attempting to find the best angle.

His first major attempt, the book *American Folklore*, attempts to identify American folklore based on a topical approach. In the book, Dorson examines some prominent categorical sources of folklore in American history, including chapters such as "Colonial Folklore" and "Negro Folklore." This approach follows the initial mission of the American Folklore society, which identifies four different areas of folkloric study in the United States as the primary source of folklore in America that the AFS was assembling to study.

- (1) For the collection of the fast vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America, namely:
 - (a) Relics of Old English Folk-Lore (ballads, tales, superstitions, dialect, etc.)
 - (b) Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union.
 - (c) Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America (myths, tales, etc.)
 - (d) Lore of French Canada, Mexico, etc.
- (2) For the study of the general subject, and for the publication of the results of special students in this department. (Bronner, *Folk Nation* 2002, 15)

Dorson's work builds on these proposed areas of study, as he explores several of these categories—considering different aspects of folkloric behavior in the United States—towards the aim of the examination of 'the general subject'. While *American Folklore* is a preliminary approach to the subject, Dorson expands on his approach with *American Folklore and the Historian*. In this follow-up, Dorson approaches the problem from another direction, addressing historical questions that would be aided by a folkloric approach. This book posits the use of the folkloric methodology for the study of history, proposing that the study of the folkloric practices of Americans is a good method for the study of the historical life of Americans. Dorson takes this one step farther in his final major work on the subject, the article "American Folklore vs. Folklore in America," his attempt to delineate his intentions for American folklore. According to Dorson, a distinction exists between "American Folklore," which relates 'folkstuff to the American historical experience,' and "Folklore in America," which was practiced in America, but does not have the same relationship to historical circumstances (R. M. Dorson 1978).

In all of these works, Dorson posits a single theme, that by looking at the folklore of Americans, the scholar, whether folklorist, historian, or Americanist, can get closer to the essence of American character(s). This in many ways exists as response to Smith's use of myth, but with an essential modification. In short, Dorson says, 'Why try to treat literature as folklore? Why not examine folklore as folklore?' Prior attempts to locate the mythic background of American history or American literature are like trying to understand a river by looking at the delta, Dorson turns attention to the source. In short, Dorson's point is this, Americans use folklore to understand their lives and looking at that folklore we can understand Americans.

How was Dorson wrong? First, Dorson takes an objective view on the influence of history. The relationship between folkloric performance and the 'American historical experience' has a single pivot. While folklore may vary, history is an objective force which pushes in a single direction. This is seen clearly in his distinction between American Folklore and folklore in America, presenting one as influential of American character and the other not. In this way, Dorson presents American history as a unique force that drives specific engagement. This view of history is a hallmark of an American Exceptionalist point of view, seeing the US as a singular case. William Wilson criticized Dorson for this approach in his article "Richard M. Dorson's Theory for American Folklore: A Finnish Analogue." Wilson highlighted the fact that all nations have "unique historical circumstances" that influence their folklore. "When Dorson set out to discover the genesis of American

folklore in the major movements and events of American History, he followed a road, then, that was neither American nor new (Wilson 1982, 39)."

Second, Dorson takes an aggregate view of American character similar to that of Henry Nash Smith. Dorson's American Folklore was impersonal and broad, not situated in individual performance but in national zeitgeist. Dorson viewed folklore less as an individual event but more as a body of material belonging to a culture presented by individuals. This is approached through criticisms by Michael Owen Jones and Simon Bronner. Jones' "Another America: Toward a Behavioral History Based on Folkloristics" criticizes Dorson's approach for sidelining the behavioral agency of folklore performance, citing folklore as a behavioral action that should be studied based on its performance by individuals rather than as an aggregate cultural form, advocating "an orientation towards the interactions of individuals in the course of daily life and the resulting forms of expressive behavior corresponding to the sharing of common experiences (Jones 1982, 49-50)." While Jones acknowledges that Dorson's approach does present some attention to individual behavior, Simon Bronner's "Malaise or Revolution?" focuses the criticism even further stating "Folklore reveals what conditions, conflicts, and concerns exist in a particular situation with human actors, not categorical social units (Bronner, Malaise or Revelation? Observations on the "American Folklore" Polemic 1982, 41)."

In all, Dorson's view of tradition and innovation in his distinction between American Folklore and Folklore in America is a sloppy one, implying that the context of performance does not influence the performance of folklore. This image,

that imported traditions can be performed in the United States without American historical circumstances influencing them ignores that the context of performance influences performance due to factors such as material availability, difference in everyday life practices or audience composition as well as the influence of immigration and subsequent importation of tradition on American historical circumstances.

Dan Ben-Amos sums up a number of Dorson's flaws by examining his historical position. Fundamentally, Dorson was a product of his historical moment and Ben-Amos recognizes this.

In the emerging "contextual approach," Dorson could well have conceived a resolution to this frustrated attempt to synthesize folklore and history. An examination of folklore as it is performed in social life would free it from the monolithic imprint of a period, or from the singular pattern of a culture. There would not be any need to conceive of folklore as reflecting any Hegelian construct of "spirit," "mind," or "impulse." The historical folklore that was implicit in Dorson's search, but never fully articulated by him, is similar to the search for cultural history that E. H. Gombrich sketches. Such a history is concerned with "the manifold interactions between the various spheres of culture" (Gombrich 1969:32). It is a history that moves away from the collective construct and into the realm of the individual in his community or communities, and explores his use and performance of folklore in relation to other individuals, times, places, and languages. It is a history that examines the folklore of a period not as a by-product of any creative impulse, but as a dynamic process that individuals and institutions employ purposefully or even aimlessly. Dorson was on the verge of ridding himself of the Hegelian burden in history and the Darwinian heritage in folklore. His receptivity to the new ideas that he felt the "contextual folklorists" generated indicated a perceived correspondence between his vision of folklore and their method (Ben-Amos, *The Historical Folklore of Richard M. Dorson* 1989, 59-60).

So, in light of this, how was Dorson right? Dorson's American folklore can present a useful heuristic for study, a lens through which one can view folkloric

performances in America. Dorson's model of examination carries some tools which, through revision, can be useful for the folkloric examination of history.

First, the idea that folklore can be influenced by historical circumstances is a major part of Dorson's approach. By examining the relationship between folkloric acts and historical circumstances, it is possible to gain perspective on influential historical events. As an example, folkloric practices such as joke telling, body decoration and personal narrative have shifted around the events of September eleventh, 2001 in an observable way. While the relationship is not direct and unified, one definitely exists.

Second, the distinction between American Folklore and Folklore in America can be a useful one if properly applied. The process of division between the two categories must be properly drawn. In this case, the distinguishing characteristic is that of context as content, the direct relationship between historical circumstance and text. Essentially, the proper distinction is based on the relationship between content and context. For Dorson's Folklore in America, the content of the performance is not about the context, but is more important than the context, preparing a Passover Seder uses traditional forms whose content is not significantly rhetorically altered by their presence in America. For Dorson's American Folklore, the content of the performance is about the context. The performance of a Fourth of July festival is rhetorically significant based on its contextual relationship to American history. This differentiation does not ignore the influence of context on content in the case of Folklore in America but highlights that a significant

relationship between content and context can exist in performance. This distinction is an important value of Dorson's work, recognizing that such a relationship can exist between circumstance and text, valuing the explicit connection as a possible object of study.

Third, Dorson's examinations of historical material did yield significant thematic elements in American Folklore. In his book *America in Legend*, Dorson identified a number of consecutive impulses in American Folklore, seeing the heroification of the Religious Man, Colonial Man, Economic Man and Humanitarian Man as steps in the evolution of American consciousness. While Dorson presented these as consecutive evolutionary steps, ignoring the persistence of such cultural symbols throughout American history, he did identify clearly the persistence of thematic images in American Folklore, allowing the understanding of centralized images of Americanness, showing the way in which American identity emerged in relationship to folkloric heroification.

Altogether, these models of study provide a number of tools for the examination of national character in relationship to textual and contextual material useful to the examination of the allegorical characteristics of *historia*. However, they exist within a broader context of the reexamination of concepts of nation, which provide a better context for a new model of allegorical national character.

Nations (re)Imagined

National identity as a general concept has received its share of critical attention. The idea of national identity has been examined and dissected based on

the concept that such collective identity emerges not from natural essences but from active and passive processes of nationalization. These critiques theorize that the nation is a product of cultural imagination rather than a product of real difference. In many cases, this critique has been a direct revision of the concept of national identity, citing the constructed nature as reason not to study material.

One of the best known critiques of the concept of national identity comes from historian Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's critique expands on earlier work about the development of national identity in the fledgling United States to outline a general theory of the development of national consciousness. As he puts it, "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. (Anderson 2006[1983], 5-6)"

Anderson's definition of the nation state rests on four linked terms within the definition: imagined, limited, sovereign, community. These four pillars present the basis of Anderson's revision of the concept of nation. In the first, Anderson deconstructs the idea that nations exist outside of their populations, re-theorizing the nation as a construct in the minds of the citizenry.

It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (Anderson 2006[1983], 6)

In other words, nationhood is not subject to evaluation for genuineness, i.e. there are not true or false nations, merely nations imagined differently by their citizenry. To Anderson, nations are part of the cultural imaginary of the citizenry, existing not objectively, but in people's minds.

The second characteristic, *limited*, deals more primarily with the way in which the concept of nation is a subdivision of humanity. "The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations (Anderson 2006[1983], 7)." This definition is interesting because of its links to other prior theories of national identity. Drawing strongly on Hegel's understanding of the self as defined by the other and the nation as a larger gestalt mind, Anderson has redefined the notion of nation toward a more postmodern definition of *limited*, understanding the way in which distinction is used to define, in which contrast creates identity. Nations as imagined are discrete entities within a world of multiple entities.

Anderson's third term, *sovereign*, is one that is far more based in historical development than in human organization. Anderson takes a very Marxian approach to the development of national identity, understanding it as an outgrowth of Enlightenment thought deconstructing a naturalist concept of ethnic-national identity. Anderson puts it simply, "It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm (Anderson

2006[1983], 7).” While this single characteristic seems the least inherent to the nation, Anderson’s definition allows for the possibility of an additional redefinition of nation in this way. Put simply, if this characteristic of nation, unlike others, is primarily a product of historical conditions, then historical conditions may change in the future to redefine nation as not primarily sovereign.

Anderson’s final aspect of definition is that of community. In many ways this aspect of his definition is essential to Anderson’s conception of the nation-state and its overall effect. As Anderson puts it,

Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (Anderson 2006[1983], 7).

This conception of nation as a community devoted to its own survival retains an interesting aspect of classical concepts of nation. Anderson, for all his reimagining, does not deconstruct the idea of nations as concerned with their own survival, understanding the way in which such imagined communities are still intimately concerned the maintenance of their existence.

Fundamentally, Anderson’s reconceptualization is a critique of certain objectivist understandings of the world. Taking a critical position on the nation as a natural unchanging characteristic or an entity independent of its constituents, Anderson redefines the nation as the product of discourse, emerging from the

process of negotiated concepts of shared identity based on shared elements of culture such as print-capitalism.

A further critique of the nature of national identity comes from the historian Prasenjit Duara. In his book *Rescuing History from the Nation*, Duara explores the birth of nationalism in Asia and its relationship to historical discourse.

Fundamentally, Duara explores the way in which nations have relied on the control of historical narratives to maintain identity. “Historical consciousness in modern society has been overwhelmingly framed by the nation-state. Yet, despite the certainty that a history belongs to a nation, the nation itself remains a highly contested phenomenon (Duara 1995, 3).” Duara sees the phenomena of nation, history and empire as directly linked, with historical narratives being the underpinning of national identity and national identity being the core of imperialist action.

Duara’s linkage between nation and history is a critical one, positing that allowing the nation-state a monopoly on history is ultimately a form of cultural imperialism which allows dominant narratives to subsume a multiplicity of identities. Duara identifies the nature of discourse as key to identity and attempts to link national identity to other forms of discursive identity.

We will thus need to break with two assumptions underlying most studies of nationalism. The first is the privileging of the nation as a cohesive collective subject. Nationalism is rarely the nationalism of *the nation*, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other. Second, nationalist consciousness is not, by itself, a unique or unprecedented mode or form of consciousness (Duara 1995, 7-8).

Thus, to Duara, the nation is not a unified subject, but a locus of discourse, a way of referring to a site of contested identity which, even in cases of internal monopoly of national identity, still retains a degree of contestation at its heart. Duara also subtly seeks to link this form of identity, which he refers to as consciousness, with other forms of discursive identity, recognizing that identity on the whole is a discursive product. In the end, Duara sees the concept of national identity as problematic.

The multiplicity of nation-views and the idea that political identity is not fixed but shifts between different loci introduces the idea that nationalism is best seen as a relational identity. In other words, the nation, even where it is manifestly not a recent invention, is hardly the realization of an original essence, but a historical configuration designed to include certain groups and exclude or marginalize others—often violently (Duara 1995, 15).

Duara's concept of nation involves the use of unifying narratives of national consciousness as acts of cultural imperialism, designed to create a center-periphery relationship within a nation outlining dominant groups and subordinate groups within the nation. An obvious example of this is the practice of *Apartheid* (Apartness) in South Africa during the Twentieth century. This practice defined a unified national identity for South Africa as inherently white and European, creating a concept of nation that subordinated black African residents. This definition was constantly under negotiation and shifted in the 1980's and 90's with the shift towards a more fundamentally representative government. This process,

according to Duara, could be seen as an example of the development of national identity as a way to subordinate the ‘multiplicity of nation-views.’

This development of a complex, multicultural understanding of national identity brings us back to the problems in the discipline of American studies. Examining the complex developments of national identity in the American Studies context, Alice Kessler-Harris’ article “Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate” is an exploration of the way in which earlier Americanist constructions of national identity fall apart in light of multiculturalism. Kessler begins with a critique of the way in which early American Studies sought to create a simple homogenized view of the United States and when that failed, relied on the description of a dominant character.

If the effort to describe the United States as homogeneous was unavailing, our predecessors could and did succeed in defining what they called the American Character. They constructed images of national identity with such concepts as individualism, pragmatism, optimism, ambition, idealism, and progress and attributed them variously to the influence of the frontier, affluence and a classless and nonhierarchical society. (Kessler-Harris 1992, 305)

Kessler-Harris sees this effort as flawed, a process of cultural determinism, where the quest for unified cultural identity led to the identification of spurious linkages between American Character and historical factors, as well as the problematic nature of American Character in the first place. Kessler-Harris’ article is in many ways a critique of anti-multiculturalism.

At the heart of the attack on multiculturalism lies a concern not for rights but for community. To its opponents the idea of what constitutes America seems to be at stake; the meaning conjured up

when we think of our nation is threatened...Thus, what is at stake has two levels: one, a set of Western ideas on which the concept of America as it is defined in these United States is said to rest, and the other, the material set of relations that we see around us and that is in danger of disintegration. (Kessler-Harris 1992, 301)

This understanding of the cultural conflict behind multiculturalism is linked directly to Kessler-Harris' critique of American Character studies. According to Kessler-Harris, the development of American Character as a reified object of study is the product of cultural anxiety on the part of dominant groups, a way that Americanist scholars attempt to respond to anxiety over loss of both a set of traditional ideas and materialist understandings of the world. To Kessler-Harris as well as to Duara and Anderson, the concept of nation is an exclusionary one, through which people are both included and excluded. "Like the process of construction on a personal level, creating a national image requires us to make conscious and unconscious decision about what to include and exclude (Kessler-Harris 1992, 308)." However, Kessler-Harris' concept of national identity also shares an orientation towards the generalized contrasting construction of identity as part of the concept of national consciousness.

Generally, these three critiques of the nation have several things in common. They fundamentally criticize the concept of the nation, defining it as an inherently limiting process through which people are divided from each other based on processes of identity creation through which a fictive national consciousness is developed. This image of nation as the product of discourse and thus inherently a social product rather than an objective essence presents a fundamental critique of

the idea of a national consciousness as easily studied and forces scholars to revise the mission of understanding national character or identity.

These models provide a complex question for the examination of *historia*, with its focus on the relationship between individual narratives and the allegorical definition of national identity. If nation is a shared exclusionary idea based on imagined shared culture, as these critiques say, can a method be developed to examine national character, or more specifically to examine national character discourse. Essentially, if history is the underpinning of narratives of nation, can a performative approach to history incorporate the critiques of nation as social construction based on performance while resisting the categorical urge to create exclusionary social reality?

Synthesizing American Character Narratives

Taking these trends in the examination of national character and combining them with a view of *historia*, it is possible to reexamine abandoned questions of American Character through the construction of a new framework. These approaches and their critiques can be synthesized into a tool with which American character can be studied.

The fundamental proposal is this—the study of discursive representations of history in highly contextual folklore as a way of understanding rhetorical images of American character embedded in individual performances existing in discourse. What does this mean? If history is a discursive representation, then each performative act contains an argument about the position of the narrative within

the larger narrative. This is especially true in highly contextual folklore such as *historia*, folklore with explicit connection between historical context and content, which invariably presents history as both contiguous and non-contiguous with the present in a way similar to Handler and Linnekin's process of tradition. Examining these narratives on history for parallelism and structure, we can see how ontological structures such as the understanding of societal conflict are present in performances.

This framework contains the qualities of Turner, in that history can be framed as influential on the present. It contains the qualities of Smith, as narratives can reveal structural ontological symbols that serve as metaphors for larger society. It contains the qualities of Dorson, in that it examines the way in which context and content can exist in a cyclical relationship of influence and the way that American identity emerges thematically from American folkways. Finally, the framework is designed to incorporate critiques of national identity and history, looking at history based on a deconstructed concept of conceptual national narratives.

This methodology outlines perhaps the most significant aspect of *historia*, the way in which they function as historical allegory. In my outline of the genre I posed the questions 'Is the text an allegorical narrative that extrapolates outwards about the broader implications of local historical events? That is, does it imply the events of history described provide general principles applicable to larger ontological structures?' This characteristic of *historia* can be explored in more detail with

reference to the prior framework. *Historia* narratives are narratives of nation, presenting specific events of history as part of a grand narrative of national reality, and serving as an expression of a motif in a larger story. A *historia* narrative about the Boston tea party may express the larger theme of American independence and the importance of protest to American history. A *historia* narrative about the massacre at Wounded Knee may express the larger theme of violent government imperialism and the importance of cultural memory. A *historia* narrative about Al Capone may deal with the larger theme of crime in an American context and the immigrant experience.

Each of these examples provides a simple model, that narratives of specific historical events provide a locus for the exploration of American character. In the first, Americans are a group of plucky rebels, in the second, a group of violent imperialists, in the third a collection of lawless immigrant entrepreneurs. These three models each arise from a text and in each; American character is clearly defined as a product of the text. However, examining such narratives is of limited utility in isolation. Instead, examining the way in which a localized *historia* discourse produces a number of specific tensions over content selection, narrative authority and historical parallelism gives a better sense of how the imaginary communities that are nations are constructed in discourse. This emerges in the examination of the Salem *historia*.

Chapter 6- Context and *Historia* in Salem, MA

It should be added that the source or model of the recreated tradition need never have existed in the form in which the seeker alleges; what is significant is that he believes that it did so exist.

—Edward Shils



The Witches Cottage shop and theater is designed by *bricolage*. Before the building is an artificial cottage front with tiny windows guarded by grotesques. Standing in the small courtyard beyond this is a faceless witch figure, inviting the visitor to pose as a Salem witch, placing their face in the cutout to pose, wearing red bodice reminiscent of Bridget Bishop, with a smirking cartoon cat, next to a cauldron reading Salem Massachusetts. The false cauldron has a notch cut in the

top and numerous tourists taking photos go two per shot, one posing as witch, and one posing with their head in the cauldron.

Salem, MA provides a wealth of material for study under the genre umbrella of *historia*. Throughout Salem, dozens of folkloric style performances engage in localized historical discourse, exploring the deep historical parallels of the events of three hundred years ago to the longer narrative of American history. But people coming to Salem enter more than just a physical reality. An imaginary Salem exists alongside, established by years of fictional material. Salem has a rich and complex presence in the American psyche as byword for witchcraft and for the persecution of the innocent. These parallel images are even more prominent than the historical discourse and have emerged extensively in the years since the events of 1692. To understand the context in which *historia* are performed, a degree of background material is necessary.

Salem in Fiction

Fictional material on Salem tends to fall in one of two categories, based primarily on the nature of the accused. In one variety of fiction, Salem is the site of a spate of false accusations, with innocent people condemned and executed by a vindictive court. In the other variety, Salem is the site of magical practice and the witch trials grow out of well founded suspicions of an occult nature, though not always accurately. These two categories combine to create a complex discursive image of Salem in the American mind.

The first example of the persecution-of-innocents model of story comes from the Nineteenth century. In 1851, Nathaniel Hawthorne published *The House of Seven Gables*, a work of generational American fiction about the descendents of a judge in some Seventeenth century New England Witch Trials cursed by one of his convicts. Hawthorne—a descendent of Salem judge John Hathorne—did not explicitly name his New England town, but the implications did not escape American readers. In Hawthorne’s work, the persecution was used by the corrupt judge to seize the titular house by eliminating competition in the form of the convicted witches. Hawthorne’s work was followed numerous works on the persecution of innocent folk through the years following a number of patterns.

The 1859 short story “Lois the Witch” by Elizabeth Gaskell presents an alternate story based on the perspective of a fictional accused Salem witch. Within the narrative, the eponymous Lois is accused of witchcraft and executed. Gaskell implies the accusations emerge from a number of unfortunate circumstances including disputes over familial obligations, a rebuffed marriage proposal and coincidental appearance at minor accidents, maintaining the innocence of Lois by maintaining a first person perspective on events. Gaskell’s story is based on an amalgamation of the experiences of several of the original accused and portrays Salem as a place where unrelated social problems were “solved” through witchcraft accusation.

The most famous fictional work on the trials also follows the persecution-of-innocents model. Arthur Miller’s 1953 play *The Crucible* is most famous as an

allegory for the McCarthy hearings and the House Un-American Activities Committee, focusing on the trials as a situation of social control and confession under duress. Miller portrays Salem as a situation of innocent people accused of horrible crimes and forced through social pressures to submit to the authority of the court and choose between confession and shame or denial and execution. For Miller, this was parallel to the HUAC investigations, where people were forced to name 'fellow' communists or be blacklisted, a lose-lose situation. Miller's portrayal, while criticized for historical inaccuracies in the ages and relationships—Abigail Williams was twelve, not seventeen and John Proctor was sixty, not in his thirties and there is no evidence of a romantic connection between the two—of his main characters, is a prime example of the witch as persecuted innocent as Miller's primary accused were portrayed as innocent of witchcraft and confessing under pressure.

A more recent example of the persecution of innocence model of Salem fiction comes in James Morrow's book *The Last Witchfinder*. Morrow's book focuses on the story of the daughter of a professional witchfinder from England who travels to the colonies to assist in the trials. Morrow's take on the trials differs from others in its view on context. While Morrow's narrative does not acknowledge witchcraft as reality, the titular witchfinder criticizes the trials on different grounds. On the one hand, they are seen as epistemically appropriate, part of an overall pattern of witchcraft examination, the finding of supposedly malevolent forces. However, the witchfinder criticizes the trials themselves for their use of spectral evidence

presented by teenage girls, unreliable witnesses in his opinion. In this book, the conflict of Salem has more to do with the shift in societal attitudes towards empirical examination requiring a shift to spectral evidence and hearsay to maintain witch persecution as Enlightenment-era science did not support the findings of the witchfinder.

All of these works, in addition to many others of varying degrees of fictionalization, present Salem as the site of the persecution of innocents using charges of witchcraft due to corruption, fanaticism, bitterness or simple resistance to change. They provide narratives of heroification, presenting the accused as models of moral behavior. Perhaps the clearest example of this comes in *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, one of his *New England Tragedies*. Corey is the moral hero, accused by a greedy community and tragically killed for his refusal to confess.

However, Salem is more than simply the persecution of innocents in the American consciousness. Other media use Salem more directly as a symbol for the practice of witchcraft, using the setting and the trials as a site of magical practice. These narratives differ mainly in terms of the nature of the witchcraft involved and can be sorted into three categories, Salem as a site of malevolent magic, Salem as a site of benevolent magic and Salem as a site of both malevolent and benevolent magic. These narratives, more than negotiating the overall persecution of innocence, negotiate the nature of intention and practice and use Salem as a byword for magical practice.

An example of the malevolent magic type of narrative is the 1993 film *Hocus Pocus*. This film, partially filmed in Salem, is about three witches—adorned with warts and intent on the consumption of children similar to the witch in “Hansel and Gretel”—who operated in colonial Salem. During the period of the witch trials they were sealed away by the colonists only to be released 300 years later. The story uses Salem because of its association with witchcraft and presents an interesting model of the trial environment. The presentation is a symbolic *mélange*, a combination of historic and folkloric symbols; persecution of witches in combination with the fairy tale image of the witch creates a pastiche image of witchcraft. An interesting side effect of this is the justification of persecution. The placement of an actual threatening presence of witches in Salem justifies the persecution of people in response, albeit through implication.

The second type of image, where Salem is a site of benevolent, or at least benign, magic is best represented by the series *Bewitched*. In 1970, in response to a studio fire, the television show filmed eight episodes of their seventh season on location in Salem, MA. The series, a situation comedy based around the marriage between the witch Samantha, played by Elizabeth Montgomery, and the non-witch Darrin, played by Dick Sargent and later by Dick York, portrayed magic in general as capable of mischief but primarily merely a force for good. Within the Salem episodes, set partially against the backdrop of a witch’s convention, magic manifests itself in Salem primarily as a tool for romantic comedy, rebuffing assertive suitors by turning them into bedwarmers or creating illusory copies of objects of romantic

interest. While witchcraft in *Bewitched* often ends up with troublesome consequences, one of the complicated aspects is the nature of intention. In the case of many of the troubled magic effects, the intention of the magic was assistance or defense, preventing unwelcome advances, helping Darrin land an ad campaign, or simply trying to avoid annoyance. While the results are often inconvenient or troubling, they generally start with benevolent or benign intention. In one episode directly tied to Salem, Samantha and Darrin are transported back in time and Samantha ends up accused of witchcraft, not for actual magic, but for the possession of a ball-point pen. Overall, this series' portrayal of Salem as a site for magical reality is not as a site of dangerous enemies, but of misunderstood intention.

The third type, of mixed benevolent and malevolent magic, appears prominently in the recent television series *Charmed*. This series, about a trio of sisters with magical powers, has as part of its backstory the death of one of their ancestors at Salem. In the 1998 episode "The Witch is Back" the story of Melinda Warren, their ancestor in Salem, is explicitly told. According to the episode, Melinda was a benevolent healer who was accused of witchcraft by a malevolent warlock, Matthew Tate, and then burned at the stake, but not before trapping the malevolent Tate in a magical locket. This portrayal is interesting in several ways. First, the events are highly historically inaccurate in their portrayal of the trials, as an example no witches were burned at the stake in Salem, MA. Second, the narrative combines the two types of fictional portrayal, including both the persecution-of-innocents and a magical reality. The use of the trials as a way of

persecuting innocent benevolent witches combines the image of the trials as unjust with the presence of actual magic. Salem remains a site of persecution while also serving as a symbol of magical reality.

In general, these fictional portrayals show some of the level of discursive negotiation over Salem's nature. The various varieties of innocent persecution and magical reality show the way in which a single historical symbol can vary in formal presentation. This is far from a total catalog of all fictional works dealing with Salem and the witch trials. Films such as *I Married a Witch*, *Love at Stake* and *The Covenant*, fictionalized adaptations of various sorts and even 'historical' versions of events all portray the events slightly differently, but fall into the same level of historical negotiation.

Overview of Performances

However, more than the fictionalizations, the active performance of history onsite in Salem creates historical discourse. Salem itself is one of the most popular historical tourist sites in the United States, especially in the month of October and visitors are treated to numerous performances on Salem history. Each performance serves as a performative act of American history, negotiating the structural aspects of American history and reality, creating parallels with the past and showing the historical attitude of the performers. Each performance takes a perspective on the hysteria that can be read outwards in their creation of structures of societal conflict. And most distinctly, each performance is a separate consumer opportunity, a separate possible narrative that can be absorbed by the tourist.

To explore this in greater depth, this chapter will examine six different performances on Salem history, organized into three categories. Each performance takes a stance on the nature of the conflict, claims a certain rhetorical authority to speak on the conflict and shows parallels to historical narratives. In each performance, American civilization is negotiated, revealing a discursive view on American national character.

I initially entered Salem expecting to observe the behavior of Neo-Pagans, seeing the way in which Salem served as a site of historical pilgrimage for this new religious movement. It was a phenomenon that I knew existed, but upon entering Salem, I realized that it was only part of a much larger phenomenon of historical negotiation. I had initially approached the problem with a limited perspective, expecting a clear dichotomy between official historical discourse and the practice of Neo-Pagans, reading against the grain, creating alternative histories of Salem. What I saw in Salem was that everywhere people were creating alternative histories, that all the performances in the city represented arguments that clearly made up the grain itself in a process that formed the basis for the genre *historia*.

What makes the case of the Salem *historia* interesting can be expressed in several characteristics. The first interesting characteristic is the scale. Salem has dozens of places providing historical tours, museum presentations, theatrical performances and haunted houses, all of which provide narratives to those willing to pay. These standing exhibits are joined by one-time events such as parties, cruises and concerts including readings from books, ticketed balls and public spell

castings. Combined with the overall tourist industry of shops selling items related to witch images such as novelty t-shirts, haunted photographs and occult accoutrements Salem is a small town with a huge tourist industry. The streets are packed through most of October with people from around the world.

The second interesting characteristic of the Salem *historia* involves the lack of historical consensus. As explored in chapter three, Salem's Witch Hysteria is a subject of complex historical debate, with the reason for the events under debate for over a century. This debate spills onto the streets of Salem, though not in a Sharks and Jets fashion. Every *historia* performance presents an argument as to why things happened, whether personal or structural, internal or external, scientific or sociological. These narratives compete to say not only how and why the events happened, but their position in the larger narratives of history and the lessons that can be extracted in the present. Combined with the scale and focus of Salem, October is very nearly an annual festival of historical debate through performance.

The third interesting characteristic gives this phenomenon a particularly American feel. Almost none of the historical material in Salem is provided free of charge, especially regarding the witch trials. While Salem does have a visitors' center with some historical material, there is scant material offered on the Witch trials, with the maritime and industrial history of Salem taking prominence instead. Historical tourists in Salem need to pay to learn about the trials and this influences the way in which *historia* are advertised and presented. Advertisements in the city try to bring visitors to "Salem's ONLY authentic supernatural and

paranormal tours! (Chouinard 2008, 13)” “Salem’s Official Ghost Tour™ (Chouinard 2008, 15)” or “Salem’s most unique LIVE ATTRACTON! (Chouinard 2008, 19)”

These claims of authority happen within the performances themselves and can be viewed as more than simply advertisement. Every ad and performance that claims unique authority over the performance feeds into an environment of active audience engagement. Audiences are encouraged to choose their historical sources, not simply to expose themselves to every performance. In Salem, tradition is for sale, not simply floating around free for all.

To analyze this overall situation, I intend to address several different performances. Sampling some of the different types of performances, I hope to present the way in which these performances create a diverse historical environment, pushing models of history and American character in a rich discourse of individual perspective. First, I will analyze some of the “museums” of Salem, looking at the way in which history is performed using static narrated displays. Second, I will analyze some of the walking tours through Salem, showing the ways in which physical travel is used to create historical narrative. Finally, I will look at some of the cultural performances on historical topics in Salem, exploring the ways in which fictional and ritualized performances provide a model of interpretive behavior that allows the extrapolation of historical discourse. Altogether, these six performances provide examples of *historia* in Salem and give insight into the variability present and the consequences of such a discourse.

Museums: Sculpting the Past

The first set of performances that I will examine here are self described as museums. To clarify, Salem has numerous businesses which describe themselves as museums, most of which are focused specifically on the witch trials. Most of these are not museums in the traditional sense, they do not have historical artifacts from the period, they are not accredited by a central organization. Instead, within Salem, museums on the witch trials tend to be narrated dioramas, animatronic productions of history similar to the Hall of the Presidents at Disneyland⁶. Just in the downtown area, Salem has the *Salem Witch Museum*, *the Witch History Museum*, *The Witch House*, *The Salem Wax Museum of Witches and Seafarers*, *The Spellbound Museum*, *The Witches Cottage*, and *The Witch Dungeon*, not to mention museums on broader subjects in local history and staged displays presented primarily as haunted houses. These museums all use a combination of live performances and staged tableaux to present a unified narrative on the hysteria, glossing extraneous details to provide a pointed message.

Salem's museums tend towards a model of presentation focused around performance. Rather than providing a series of displays for open observation at a pace chosen by the viewers, Salem's museums provide mandatory narration, controlling the interpretation of the presented material. The narratives in these museums are provided by a combination of recorded material and live presentation, using both static and dynamic forms of performance. In this way, the museums

⁶ Salem does have accredited museums within its city limits. The Peabody Essex Museum contains a significant collection of historical artifacts, as does the Salem Visitors Center, however, neither of these focus on the Salem Witch Trials in any depth.

keep both a tight control on the material presented and a level of variability that allows improvisation to context in such a way that makes them interpretable as folklore.

The Witch History Museum



As our studies of European witchcraft and the witch trials become more interdisciplinary, our explanations for the upsurge of witch-accusations and massive witch hunts must be more comprehensive. It would appear to be impossible to understand witch accusations and the tensions in village life in isolation from these broader historical developments which brought pressure to bear on traditional peasant life.

—Richard A. Horsley

Even in October, the busiest tourist month in Salem, the witch history museum is slow early Sunday mornings. In the entrance, a shop devoted to witch memorabilia, people toy with witch balls and hex signs, examine local photographs and astrological tapestries. The doors into the back, where the museum is, don't open until 10:30, so I wait, examining the calendars and tchockes for sale in the gift shop. The shop itself is full of materials related to both history and witchcraft belief. I pass the time looking at the display of Witch balls, reading about how they entice and trap evil spirits when hung in the window.

Just before 10:30, a young man dressed in makeshift colonial garb, a tri-corn hat, short cape and breeches with tights, opens the doors and calls aloud for ticket holders. I approach, show my receipt and am shown through to the empty waiting area. The room itself is large and dim, filled with pews facing a stage with a colonial tableau, a wooden slatted house with diamond windows and a group of sculpted Native Americans dancing in a circle around a fire before a wall painted like a wild harbor scene. On the walls of the high ceilinged room, large printed photographs of locations in and around Salem are displayed, some of them actual locations(the Witch House, George Corwin's grave), some significant memorials or recreations(the Rebecca Nurse house, the Witch Dungeon, the Puritan Meeting House) , some of them speculated locations of unknown events(Gallows Hill, A Witch Pit).

After a few minutes in which the assembled audience examines the photographs, a young woman, dressed in similar colonial dress with a bonnet and

apron over a long skirt, emerges from the window of the wooden house and asked the handful of people in the room to take seats. Once the audience has been seated, the woman emerges from the house and walks the stage, presenting an overview of the trials and a short, formulaic speech about the rules of the exhibit before leading the audience down into the basement of the museum and the real exhibit.

The exhibit itself tells the story of the witch hysteria through a series of dimly lit, animatronic dioramas described and explained through scripted performances by the guide, a young woman in colonial dress. As advertisement for the exhibit says “The stories of 1692 are told through a historically accurate live presentation and tour downstairs, where you will walk through the forest, meet Tituba in Rev. Parris’ kitchen, visit Old Salem village and view 15 life size scenes depicting these stories.” The different scenes presented in the narrative outline the hysteria as a series of consecutive events, with a few sidetracks for the more fantastic aspects of the trials. At each diorama, the guide introduces the materials covered before starting the animatronic motion and recording.

The order of events presented in dioramas organizes the hysteria as a sequential phenomenon⁷. The museum begins with a diorama of the young girls, Betty Parris, Abigail Williams, Anne Putnam Jr. and Elizabeth Hubbard dancing in the woods outside Salem, climaxing in the appearance of George Burroughs as a devilish figure in the woods, holding a book and a quill [1]. From here, the narrative moves to the home of Samuel Parris where Tituba, here portrayed as an older woman, and her husband John Indian, portrayed as a typical woodlands

⁷ Their position will be noted on the corresponding map with numbers in brackets.

Indian, tell stories of the supernatural to some of the assembled girls [2]. The next diorama shifts to one of the girls in bed, shaking while Doctor Griggs tends to her, pronouncing in dire fashion that the illness is due to witchcraft [2.5].

As the narrative progresses, the setting shifts to a village scene, with horrified villagers reacting to the rumors and accusations and adding more of their own[3]. It is here that the name of George Burroughs is brought up, whose capture is the subject of the next diorama.

Burroughs' capture is shown in spectacular fashion in the next diorama. Burroughs is shown at the door to his cabin in Wells, Maine, with chains wrapped around his chest, fighting against Sheriff Corwin and the men brought to capture him[4]. The scene is lit by flashes of light as the narrator explains the powerful thunderstorm that accompanied the capture including a lightning strike to a nearby tree. The next diorama portrays the trial of Abigail Hobbs, with her young servant 'Candy' testifying about the construction of a poppet from cheese and grass[5]. The narration describes that as the judge throws the poppet into a bucket of water, Candy ran outside and tried to drown herself.

From this trial diorama, the only specific mention of the legal proceedings, the museum shifts to a diorama explaining witches familiars. A forest scene with a witch figure straight out of a cartoon fairy-tale surrounded by animals and more fanciful creatures, the diorama narration explains the concepts of familiars and witches teats to the audience in some detail[6]. The next diorama is a miniature portrayal of the execution of George Burroughs on Gallows Hill[7]. Before the

recording, the guide explains that all the executions were done by hanging and that nobody was burned in Salem. The tableau itself displays the hanging as if from some distance and an exchange between Burroughs and Cotton Mather is described. The diorama that follows the execution is an empty forest scene, where the narrator explains the conditions in which the remains of the executed witches were disposed, as they were denied burial [8]. In the accompanying recording, the narrator speaks of the disappearance of bodies from the witch pit as families reburied their loved ones, stealing their bodies in the night.

At this point, the strict narration of the events of the trials ends and the museum presents some of the peripheral and dramatic aspects of the hysteria. First, a diorama of Cotton Mather himself, engaged in the study of a human skull is presented [9]. Mather's importance in the colonial period and his interest in the scientific study of witchcraft are examined including details of his exhumation of deformed babies from Quaker graves and his examination of the skull of Burroughs (which appeared to be larger than normal because of the boiling process which enlarged it, according to the tour guide). Second, the theft of Sheriff Corwin's body by Philip English, a prominent merchant whose goods had been stolen after a witchcraft accusation, in order to ransom English's goods from Corwin's family is portrayed through a diorama of English, seated with Corwin's coffin behind him [10]. The tour guide brings up an interesting side note, that English took the ransom money from Corwin's family and built St. Peter's church, the first non-Puritan church in Salem. Finally, the appearances of Giles Corey's ghost in the

Salem cemetery is presented in diorama detailing that it has appeared in the past before events of great tragedy and implying that it may appear again at any time to presage disaster for Salem[11]. From here, tourists are escorted back up into the gift shop above the diorama area.

Witch History Museum Site Map [Not to Scale]



Witch History Museum Analysis

The interesting aspects of the Witch History Museum's narrative revolve around the efforts within to condense the events into a sequential narrative and to focus on the problematic aspects of the event while maintaining a sense of dramatic unity. This process is achieved with a unifying focus on George Burroughs as a victim of the trials.

The use of Burroughs as exemplar is mentioned explicitly in promotional material for the Witch History Museum, “A Salem minister, accused by teenage girls of being the devil, was captured in Maine, hanged here, and had his head removed by another minister (Witch History Museum 2008).” Burroughs as focus provides a unifying narrative with several interesting consequences. First, Burroughs is included in the initial accusations through his appearance as the Devil in the woods, providing a sense of the trials as a unified event from start to finish rather than a set of haphazard accusations and re-accusations. Burroughs’ spectacular capture and then dramatic hanging provide a compelling central narrative that can link the overall events of the hysteria.

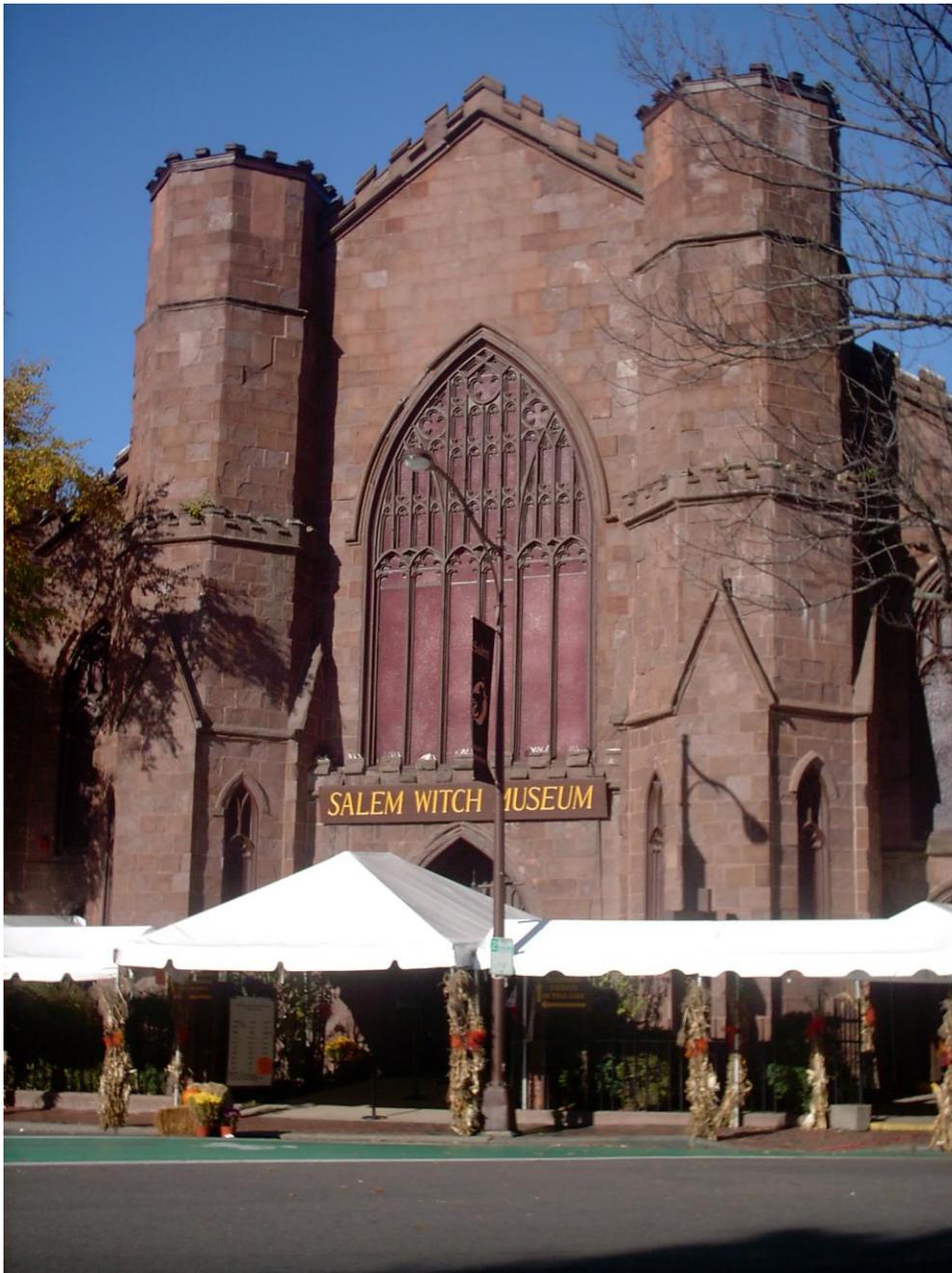
The second aspect of the focus on Burroughs is the way in which it serves to indict superstition as a basis for justice. The geographical disparity of Burroughs ‘appearing’ to the girls in Salem is highlighted by the explicit depiction of his capture in Maine. The faulty assumptions of Cotton Mather are shown by his mistakes regarding the size of Burroughs’ skull. The errant principles of the Lord’s Prayer as evidence are shown in the dramatic climax of Burroughs’ hanging. By focusing on Burroughs’ process as the central unifying narrative of the Hysteria, the Witch History Museum provides a representation of the period that indicts fallible societal beliefs more than any specific actors.

In this narrative, as in all historical narratives, choices are made that limit the scope of included material in a way that provides extended comprehensibility. The Witch History Museum’s narrative is the story of Burroughs with sidetracks

into other dimensions of superstition such as the story of the familiars, of Giles Corey's ghost and of the magical poppet. By making the choices necessary to make this unified narrative, the Museum's planners and performers have transformed disparate events into a comprehensible tale that places faulty societal interpretation of uncanny events and an overall Puritan gullibility as a primary cause for the problems of 1692.

By claiming the authority of sited recreation through the use of photographic representations upstairs and an opening narrative of presence in prime real estate of historic Salem Town, the Witch History Museum essentializes the Salem Witch Hysteria, boiling it down to a singular event with a singular societal cause: superstitious Puritans.

Salem Witch Museum



If our views about our identities are partly explanations of the world in which we live and these explanations are based on the knowledge we gather from our social activities, then the claim that oppressed social groups have a special kind of knowledge about the world as it affects them is hardly a mysterious one requiring idealist assumptions about cultural essences or inaccessible particularities.

—Satya Mohanty

The Salem Witch Museum stands imposing over the Salem Commons. Inhabiting an old church in front of an intimidating statue of Roger Conant, pedestrians cross the street on crosswalks with painted witches and line up down the sidewalk, waiting for entrance into the museum. As a group of people, all wearing green stickers the size of a fifty cent piece labeled with the name of the museum and bearing the image of a witch holding a broom and looking down at a cat engaged in cleaning itself, shuffles slowly out of the gift shop, a group wearing stickers of the same design in tan are brought into an entry hall festooned with signs and displays.

Different signs describe the long international history of witch persecution and some of the specific aspects of the Salem trials, with multiple displayed objects such as recreated Puritan garb and historical artifacts. On the wall, visitors can read about things such as swimming a witch, burning at the stake (clearly stated not to have happened in Salem), the dangers of ergot (with arguments both pro- and con-), the writing of Miller's *The Crucible* (and its included inaccuracies) and the position of memorials and historical locations in the Salem area. Next to the ticket seller, a computer printout describes the Wiccan holiday Samhain, October 31st. The largest and most prominently displayed of the signs contains three lists of names, symbolically placing the accused, the executed and the afflicted together on the way into the building. As the group of several dozen tan stickered tourists shuffles about the lobby reading the signs, the doors to the central chamber of the room open and several employees usher in those gathered, checking their stickers

and advising them that as the show takes place in the round, the best seats are in the center of the room, around the circle on the floor.

Gradually, the audience shuffles into a large, dimly lit room with felt covered benches rising from the floor and a bright red circle [1] in the center of the room with the names of those executed written in a spiral from border to center. On every wall of the room, set above the heads of all but the tallest of the audience, are sculpted figures, some fantastical, some mundane, some in various degrees of peril, some seated in judgment or penitence. The figures in their tableaux sit dark and quiet as the audience enters, as they find their seats and settle into place, a recorded voice speaks to the assembled crowd, 'Do you believe in witches? Millions of your ancestors did.' From there, the story of the trials begins, with dioramas being lit and darkened, showing the dramatis personae of the hysteria and crafting a narrative from the dioramas presented.

The story begins with the figure of the devil, horned, hoofed, bearing sword and book with a fierce expression on his face, lit with ominous red light [2]. The narrator, voiced by a recording played through speakers on the ceiling, explains the Puritan belief in the devil and his book, a figure of great danger for the people of Salem. As the light fades on the devil, it rises on the Putnam household. The story turns to the life of the young girls of the household, suffering from the strict life of a young girl in a Puritan world, with no sources of amusement and the strict hand of authority looming over them. Meanwhile, Ann Putnam Sr. is said to be haunted by the specters of deceased infants, the children who did not survive [3].

From this grim scene, the lights shift downward to the kitchen of Samuel Parris' house, with the "servant" Tituba, seated before the fire with an audience of girls around her [4]. As the lighting shifts from innocent to ominous, the narrator explains how Tituba played with the girls, playing to the belief of the community with spells to learn of future husbands and to commune with the dead. As this scene fades, the Hysteria begins, with Dr. Griggs shown being called to deal with the afflictions in the Parris household [5]. Griggs is said to have ruled out epilepsy, but without an easy explanation, the examination is said to have turned to an inquisition. A cry to Tituba for help is mistaken for blame and witchcraft becomes the diagnosis.

As the narrative enters the trials, it comes to its first biographical sketch. The elderly Rebecca Nurse is portrayed, meek and innocent looking, but the narrator speaks of her many enemies in the town [6]. Citing the enmity of Ann Putnam Sr., mother of one of the afflicted girls, the diorama is lit from behind with silhouettes of the accusers, explaining how the spectral evidence came to be used before fading. The lights come up on a large courtroom with a group of wigged judges seated before a room with the afflicted girls bearing witness with twisted faces [7]. The narrator introduces the jury, who first bring back a verdict of not guilty, but based on the hysterical reactions of the girls, the jury is sent back to reconsider until they bring back a verdict of guilty.

From here, the narrative transitions back to the stories of the accused, focusing first on the story of one of the 'heroes' of the hysteria, John Proctor [8].

Pictured as a hale and hearty man in Puritan garb, Proctor's active dismissal of the accusation process is held up as example of his virtue. But Proctor's wife is accused, and then Proctor finds himself in front of the same silhouettes as Rebecca Nurse, accused of the practice of witchcraft. Moving left in the dioramas; the narrative shows the Salem Jail and addresses the scope of the accusations. Showing a crowded set of cells stacked in two tiers, the narrative speaks of the two hundred fifty people jailed during the hysteria, kept in terrible conditions [9]. As sad music plays, light focuses on Rebecca nurse, kept in chains, John and Abigail Proctor, imprisoned separately, and Tituba, struck down by hysteria over her race. The narrative focuses on the plight of the jailed, on the financial burden of imprisonment and the need to pay for better treatment.

From here, the narrative moves again, becoming more grotesque. The pressing of Giles Corey is displayed with Sheriff Corwin joined by an assistant reminiscent of Marty Feldman in *Young Frankenstein* [10]. As Corey rests on a platform, being pressed to death, he utters aloud his well known phrase 'more weight', as the narrator points out that he never spoke a word in court and refused to enter a plea. From Giles Corey to George Burroughs, the narrative reaches its crescendo with the hanging of the former minister on Gallows Hill [11]. With Cotton Mather present in his ministerial regalia, Burroughs recites the Lord's Prayer, thought impossible for witches. As the assembled waver, Mather reminds them that Burroughs has been convicted by a court of law and the lights fade as Burroughs hangs, with the background lit by silhouettes, all of hanging women.

The narrator speaks up against this backdrop, saying how the execution of witches never came again and was never as bad as in Europe.

The display in the central room ends with an epilogue set several years later. In the corners flanking the large tableau of Burroughs' hanging are two figures, a minister at his pulpit—identified in the narration as Joseph Green[12b]—and a woman seated in a pew—identified in the narration as a grown Ann Putnam Jr. [12a]. Later in life, the narration explains, Ann Putnam Jr. confessed to her role in the hysteria, apologizing for the hurt and suffering that her actions caused. As the lights fade, the narrative concludes on a somewhat prideful note, 'we gave way but once, and then only briefly, to our fears.'

As the lights come up, a uniformed worker enters the room and informs the assembled audience that they are now to be split into two groups to view the second part of the exhibit. Moving into a smaller back room of the museum, the audience is presented with a secondary display—Evolving Perceptions—which details the changing images of witches in Western culture. The worker guides the audience to three smaller dioramas, each of them focused on images of witches, playing short recordings speaking of three images associated with the term witch. The first figure is a short, plainly dressed woman presented in a primitive house with plants drying from the rafters [13]. She introduces herself as a pagan midwife and speaks of her role as part of a matriarchal line of wise women who helped with herbs and matters of the heart. She speaks of an old religion worshipping an earth mother at the center of all earthly cultures.

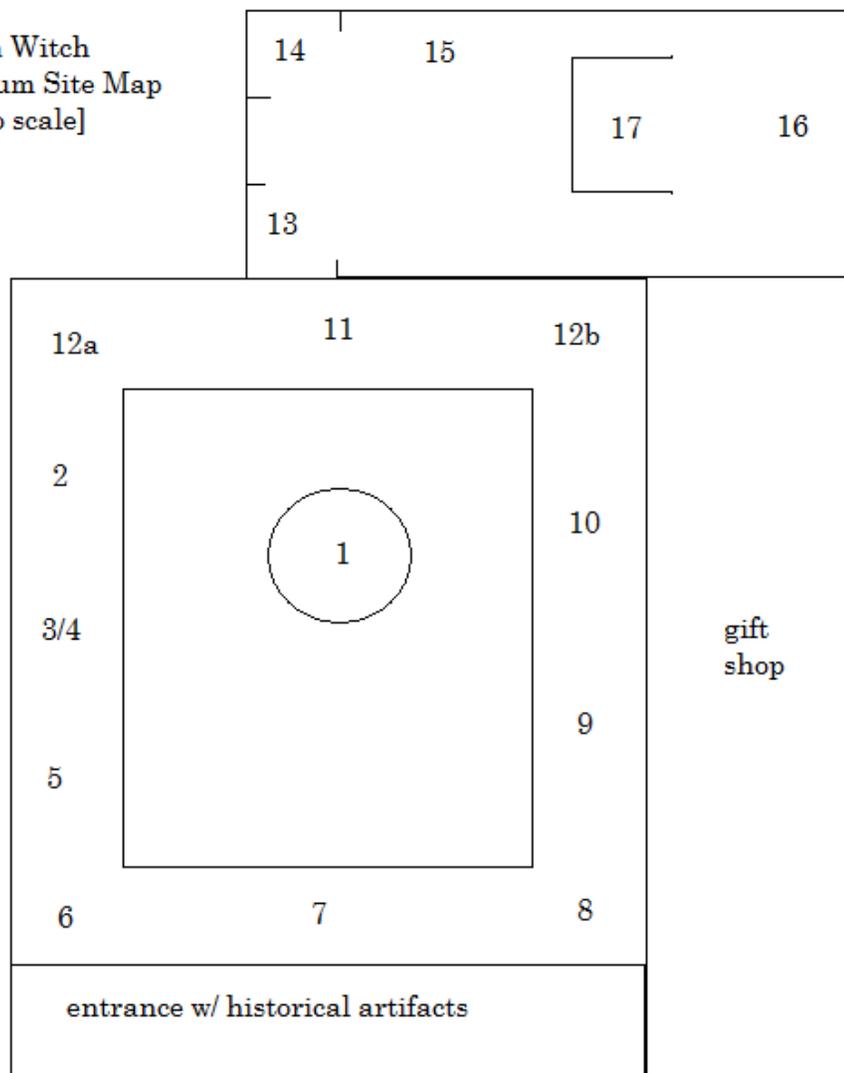
After the recorded narrations, the worker talks about the burning times in 'Old World cultures' with the midwives declared heretics and the image of the wise woman recast into that of the witch. Turning to the next diorama, a green skinned witch, wearing the long black dress and pointed hat, riding a broom over a village at night, the worker begins another recorded narration [14]. The green skinned witch introduces herself as a character in ancient folklore, once a pagan, now turned into a symbol of evil, used to justify the killing of hundreds and thousands.

From here, the audience is moved clockwise, pausing at two wall displays. The first one presents a timeline of witch persecution, touching on things such as the Venus of Willendorf, the publishing of the *Malleus Malificarum* and the time span of the inquisition [15]. The second is more telling and against the backdrop of images from the McCarthy era, a set of parallels is set up explicitly for the audience [16]. At the bottom of the wall is a formula for hysteria: Fear + Trigger = Scapegoat. Below each of these components are specific manifestations of this formula parallel to the Salem case: Japan + Pearl Harbor = internment camps, Communism + HUAC/McCarthy=Black-listing, Infection/HIV+AIDS=Gay community. The worker speaks up at this, mentioning orally the persecution of Arab Americans after September 11th as a further case of this parallel before turning the audience to the final diorama.

Standing in a woodland setting are a man and a woman wearing modern archaic garb including pentacles, metal circlets and crushed velvet capes [17]. In a recorded message, they identify themselves as modern day witches, who follow

tenets simple but powerful, harm none. The figures are presented as members of the craft, following traditions from the ancient world and honoring symbols like the maiden, the mother and the crone. The recording concludes on a historical note, 'the church persecuted us, but in the United States today, we are guaranteed our freedom.' As the presentations conclude, the audience is ushered into the museum gift shop and from there, back onto the street.

Salem Witch
Museum Site Map
[not to scale]



Salem Witch Museum Analysis

The Salem Witch Museum provides a dual narrative, telling both the specific story of the events of Salem and then offering a more recent codicil on the overall history of persecution and witchcraft. These two narratives are both notable for their shape, which gives clues into some of the ways in which the narration presents a worldview.

The first narrative has a highly dramatic shape, seen in the ascending nature of the narrative, moving from the commonplace to the grotesque, with initial scenes in family homes and courtrooms giving way to the grotesque portrayals of jails, torture and brutal execution. This crescendo, focusing on the escalation of the trials and both beginning and ending with the story of Ann Putnam Jr., outlines the tragedy as an elaborate interpersonal psychodrama that develops from childish play to societal tragedy. By showing the distinct role of the girls in the overall accusations, the Salem Witch Museum's first narrative places the blame on the girls as root cause, while their conclusion with the confessions of Ann Putnam Jr. connects the full consequences of the trials with the actions of the afflicted girls.

The secondary narrative of the Salem Witch Museum follows a very different trajectory. While the initial narrative follows a steep plot arc, the secondary narrative attempts to provide a longer view of the conflict, placing it in historical line with both the historical image of the witch and with the overall patterns of persecution in culture. In this narrative, Salem is both a blip in an overall pattern of culture—a case of recurring public panic with variable details but generalized

results—and a point in a historical continuity of witch images—an event neither completely typical or completely atypical.

The two narratives have two different apparent centers that seem in some ways to contradict each other as to the origin of persecution. The first narrative follows a fairy tale pattern, with an interdiction/violation/consequence structure. The interdiction—which is not spoken openly but remains a tacit aspect of the narrative—“do not accuse your neighbor of witchcraft” is violated by the girls in a way that starts a crisis with consequences beyond their initial intents, leaving them as regretful as the fabled boy who cried wolf. The second narrative follows a model closer to that of Marxist historians, with recurrent class conflicts emerging under different circumstances. In this narrative, the persecution is less an individual narrative event with personal causes, but a broader historical pattern that manifests itself through people. This leaves the Salem Witch Museum with not one message but two, a pair of models of behavior that do not always match up.

Walking Tours

The second style of performance we will look at in Salem is the walking tour. As one walks around in Salem in October, it is common to pass groups of people holding candles, wearing tags on their shirts or simply following a guide wearing a microphone. Unlike the museums, the walking tours hold their exhibits in common, making use of the streets and alleys of Salem to tell the story of Salem’s past. Limited by this, the walking tours focus their attention on specific materials within

the city that provide insight into the period of the trials, a matter made complicated by an overall lack of historical buildings in the city.

Walking tours on the one hand are interestingly limited and on the other hand are interestingly freed. Among their limitations is the requirement to fit the narrative to a walking path, visiting locations in an order that must conform to the path of the narrative to avoid excessive backtracking either figurative or literal. Additionally, the choice of locations must be connected in some logical fashion to the narrative told, even loosely. At the same time, walking tours are able to use the authority granted by literal placement as jumping off points, crafting narratives based on an inherent aura given to literal locations. Rather than assert validity of recreation, the walking tour is free to allow audience interpretation of authority based on localization. The way in which these limitations and freedoms play out in individual tours give interesting insight into questions of historical authority.

In general, the walking tours themselves have an interesting relationship to space. They follow a model quite similar to that proposed by Liliane Weissberg and Dan Ben-Amos, “Interestingly, however, it also links back to an *ars memoria* in which buildings, objects, and places have turned into theaters that help us both to recall and to construct our own historical identity in the process (Ben-Amos and Weissberg, *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* 1999, 18).” In this way, the physical spaces become the narrative, allowing a construction of identity through physical contact with space. By walking the selfsame streets, the walking tours create a pedestrian theater of history, allowing the construction of space into

event and event into identity. The details of this process involve interesting degrees of interaction, as multiple tours compete for historic locations, sometimes stacking up outside the field where Giles Corey was crushed or the border of Bridget Bishop's orchard. By limiting themselves to special material, they tell narratives that are inherently linked to each other as much as they are to the past.

Salem Historical Tours: Witchcraft Walk



Objects (or language turned into objects) became the means of regaining a cognizance of the past and promised a means to hold on to it. They demanded their own narrative... Monuments were erected in increasing numbers to safeguard against forgetting not just other persons and diverse events, but also oneself.

-Liliane Weissberg.

The crowd for the Witchcraft Walk gathered in small clumps on Charter Street, halfway down the street from a pair of street magicians plying their trade to a gathered crowd of onlookers. The morning was cold, but the mid afternoon sun has warmed the area so the dozen or so attendees wear their jackets unbuttoned or tied around their waists. Around the appointed time, as the magic show hits its crescendo up the street, a woman in a black suit jacket with a portable microphone steps out of the building and gathers everyone together. She introduces herself and tells of the tour, explaining that walking tours are more in depth than the museums around the town, and that she will be taking us around the city to places that were here during the times of the trials.

At the first stop—near the intersection of Washington and Essex streets, across from the *Bewitched* statue and near the old town well and church—the stage is set. The tour guide explains how the Salem we see today is very different than the Salem of 1692. In 1692, Salem was not one town but three towns, Salem Town, Salem Village (now Danvers) and Salem Farms (now Peabody). The town was the site of shipping and was the home of the Salem church, while the village and the farms were agricultural communities that existed in a dependent relationship with the town. Not only did they not have their own markets, but they didn't have their own churches, and in a culture that monitors how frequently one goes to church—indicated by the tour guide in a 'Calvinism 101' interlude in the narrative—that meant a weekly four hour trek to town and back .

This conflict came to a head starting in 1689, when Thomas Putnam of Salem Town brings the Reverend Samuel Parris, a failed merchant from the West Indies to Salem to fill the empty parsonage, vacated by George Burroughs several years prior. Parris was a controversial figure, asking for a higher salary in his first sermon and demanding ownership of the parsonage, something atypical for the time and place. Social pressures began to mount in the area, with people in the village demanding their own church and pastor and tensions rising between pro-Parris and anti-Parris households.

These tensions are said to have become focused based on a game led by Parris' slave from Barbados, Tituba. The tour guide steps away from the strict narrative for a moment here to point out that many portrayals of Tituba's game focus on Tituba as a practitioner of voodoo. This image of Tituba is incorrect, according to the guide, Tituba was Native American and the game was from English folkloric practice, not voodoo as we know it today. Sometime after the fortune telling game, some of the girls of the household began to show signs of illness. The doctor is called and he is the one to first say witch in relation to the affliction. The girls, wanting attention in a world where they are largely ignored, latch onto the suggestion of witchcraft and focus the attention on specific targets. Sarah Good, an old impoverished beggar is targeted, as is Sarah Osbourne, a woman who is rarely seen in church. The accusations become a way of solving disputes, illustrated well in the case of Bridget Bishop.

With this, the tour moved from the site of the old church, up Essex street to the corner of Bridget Bishop's property in a broad brick alley. The tour guide opens the story of Bishop with a discussion of the complexity of women's rights at the time. In the Puritan period, Bishop's ownership of property and conducting of business—an orchard which lay where the tour stood—was seen as scandalous. In addition, she engaged in economic disputes with community members, had red hair and dressed above her station, and was popular among the men. The tour guide here alluded to the belief in haggling, suggesting that the men of the town may have had different reasons for imagining Bridget Bishop in their bedrooms at night, but that in the context, they interpreted it as evidence of sorcery rather than a later Freudian interpretation of such an appearance.

The tour shifted at this point to walking north along the property line towards Bishop's house and the old dungeon. As we walk, the guide talked about the patterns of the accusations and the way in which they correlate to land ownership. As she explains, the land ownership was based on a strict process of transfer, but that all bets were off when one was accused of witchcraft. Sheriff George Corwin would confiscate land, sell it before trial and make money off it. One hundred ninety two people were accused and had their land taken and sold.

The tour then came to 10 Federal Street, the location of the old dungeon. Explaining some later history, the tour guide told of how in 1956, when construction was being done in the area, the remains of the old gaol were found and hauled off without attention to preservation because at the time, Salem did not want to admit

its shameful past. This is underscored in her narrative as she tells of the hardships of the imprisoned, charged for even simple food, their families charged extra for anything better than bread and water, unable to be released without payment. In her description, she highlights the complicity of Judge Jonathan Corwin, brother to Sheriff George, and a fellow corrupt official making money off the trials.

The tour moves a short distance away to an empty lot between the more recently built old jail and a large cemetery. Gesturing to the cemetery, the tour guide explains how this was an empty field in 1692 and how it was here that Giles Corey was brought to try and extract a confession. Corey's silence in court and subsequent pressing is described in detail, but with a great focus on the property issues involved. The tour guide explains how the heroic Corey deeded away his land before his accusation to protect it from seizure by the corrupt officials. The tour guide explains the escalating cruelty of the Puritan justice, with Sarah Good's four year old daughter arrested and forced to watch the hanging of her mother. As people began to complain, Governor Phipps stepped in and declared the use of spectral evidence to be illegal and further arrests were stopped. Illegal trials were held in January, which Phipps overturned and a silence about the trials settled over Salem until 1970.

As the tour guide puts it, in 1970, *Bewitched* came to town to film some episodes. The next year, tourists began to come, drawn by the television and museums began to spring up to tell the story. This interest came too late for some spots, like the old gaol and the original gallows hill. According to the guide, the

original hill was torn down and used as part of the fill for the harbor, all as part of the attempt to forget the tragedy.

The tour moves from the empty lot towards the witch trials memorial, stopping briefly at the Church of St. Peters, a Episcopal church founded as anti-Calvinist by a victim of Puritan justice [the unnamed Philip English]. As the tour continues, the tour guide mentions some of the theories on the nature of the original accusations. She talks about the possibilities the girls were initially goaded into the accusations by Thomas Putnam and that it was like a game of follow-the-leader. She dismisses the possibility of ergotism, saying that there would have been effects on the whole family, long term damage and that there had been no rye crop that year. She mentions the possibility of encephalitis from mosquitoes causing hallucinations in the girls, but ultimately comes to no conclusion.

As the tour approaches its end at the Witch Trials memorial, she mentions the overall results of the trials and their aftermath. In 1711, the families of the victims filed suit for pardons, trying to have their families names cleared. In the 1950's, most of the pardons were granted, with the last coming in 2001. The tour arrives at the memorial and concludes with a final appeal to memory and the story of the true time span of the event. According to the tour guide, the trials properly viewed lasted fifteen months, between the first accusations and the last prisoner released, Tituba, sold from jail to an unnamed individual in 1693.

Witchcraft Walk Analysis

The Witchcraft Walk, as is typical in walking tours, focuses its narrative around geographical details, trying to unify real places into a coherent narrative. The narrative that emerges is one of complex class conflict which tends to focus on specific details of the period of the Salem Witch Hysteria to create a potential causative narrative. At the heart of the Witchcraft Walk narrative is the relationship between governments and individuals and the problems that occur when the government focuses too clearly on personal and class interests rather than on a generalized democratic functionalism.

This narrative initially takes focus based on the geographic argument at the heart of authority claims by the Witchcraft Walk narrative. By beginning the tour at the location of the Salem church while focusing on the distance between the church and the surrounding communities which it historically served, the narrative puts the class conflicts at the heart of the overall narrative, framing the hysteria as an outgrowth of the class interests. These class interests, focused through the interpersonal pettiness over the Parris appointment and the accusations by the afflicted girls provided a window through which greedy and corrupt officials could use the tensions to benefit themselves.

While the narrative definitely condemns the corrupt officials at the heart of the process, citing the seizure of property and the extortion of money from prisoners, it also highlights the eventual role of good government in driving out bad, citing the intervention by Governor Phipps as the eventual conclusion of the trials

and the eventual move by the Massachusetts government to exonerate those convicted in the trials.

At its heart, the Witchcraft Walk provides a sort of ‘perfect storm’ argument on the trials themselves. Rather than simply placing the blame on a specific subgroup or root cause, it is the combination of causes focused through an environment of community tension and fed by corrupt officials that creates a societal tragedy. This narrative indicts not the individuals involved but a lack of larger attention, a broader perspective that comes from a logical federalism.

This highlighting of outside attention as a solution to community malaise appears in the attention paid to the role of outside media in Salem tourism. Within the Witchcraft Walk narrative, *Bewitched* and *The Crucible* served to bring Salem back to national attention in a way that encouraged historical interest, drove the final pardoning of the accused and prevented the continued destruction of historical material. While both are inaccurate portrayals, they brought broader attention that allowed more accurate material to gain more access. Fundamentally, the argument at the heart of this narrative is that outside attention helps the truth to come to light, sometimes too late for victims. The heroification of outsider attention in some ways valorizes the tourist as an outside observer whose attention preserves history.

Hocus Pocus Tours



The accusations...were directly related to the breakdown of the village community and the emergence of a newer set of individual values in place of the older communal ones. English society was undergoing profound social changes; and women, as the most dependent members of that society, were the most vulnerable to the effects of these changes

–Clarke Garrett

Amidst the hustle and bustle of an October Saturday evening on Salem's main streets a lanky twenty-something dressed as Abraham Lincoln in stovepipe hat, long black coat and thin beard waits outside the maritime museum, scanning the crowd for people with paper tags dangling from their coats. The tagged people have come "to journey back through time to uncover historic facts of intriguing people, peculiar places and extraordinary events from Salem's colonial beginnings to the present day (Hocus Pocus Tours Promotional Flier 2007)." Over the next 75 minutes, the group, armed with heavy coats and umbrellas to protect from the New England fall weather, wanders through the streets of Salem, pausing occasionally to listen to the Lincoln impersonator tell stories about the history of Salem's buildings and people.

The Hocus Pocus tour weaves a large narrative of Salem's mysterious history based primarily on three connected episodes, the Witch Hysteria, the conflict between the corrupt Sheriff George Corwin and the prominent merchant Philip English, and the murder/robbery of a wealthy Salem resident by his servants. These narratives and their ties to geographic features in modern Salem are used to construct a holistic image of Salem history, a history based on treachery, deceit, injustice and the uncanny.

These three narratives work in tandem to present an image of Salem. They are presented interwoven with each other, alternating episodes and tied to each other through multiple common threads. Hocus Pocus Tours did not move chronologically, instead jumping from settlement to the present as the geographic

features alternated in prominence. At the heart of most of the narrative is a single thread, the corruption of Sheriff Corwin as the core of a narrative of the witch hysteria as one of treachery, deceit, injustice, greed and the uncanny.

The core of the narrative is the conflict between Sheriff Corwin and Philip English, explained most completely at the church at the corner of Brown and St. Peter where the Church built by Philip English stood. Here the guide described the base of the conflict, English was the most prominent merchant in Salem, making his money from trade with England while Corwin was the Sheriff of the town and jealous of English's money. When English was accused during the hysteria, Corwin took the opportunity to seize English's property for himself, when English fled the county.

At the next stop in the tour, the guide explains that Corwin's corruption extended throughout the trials. Behind the old jail building, not the gaol originally used for the trials but the jail built later and used into the 20th century, the guide described the conditions of Giles Corey's death by pressing. Claiming the empty lot as the original site of the pressure, the guide went further into the motivations, assigning to Corwin the desire to procure Corey's property through this gambit. Hocus Pocus Tours emphasizes the degree to which the choice of torture was Corwin's and the degree to which this choice was a reach backwards in history to a law that most of Salem found uncivilized or barbaric.

The tour passes the site of the old gaol and pauses to describe the conditions and extent of the imprisonment. More than any other narrative, more even than

the official Witch Trials Memorial, Hocus Pocus Tours recognizes that the victims of the Witch Hysteria were more than simply the twenty executed. At the gaol, this is driven home, with information about the hundreds imprisoned who pled guilty, including those four who died in prison and were denied justice. The conditions of the gaol were described as oppressive and overcrowded, full of disease and poor treatment and once again, it places the blame on the corrupt Sheriff Corwin.

The last stop in the overall narrative of Sheriff Corwin takes place across the street from a modern real-estate office. It was in the basement of the house at this address that Sheriff Corwin's body was buried once his heirs retrieved it from the ransom of Philip English, English having returned to Salem after the trials to retrieve his property and seized Corwin's body to get Corwin's heirs to accede to his demands. The guide explained that Corwin's behavior during the trial period had earned him enough enemies that his family was too worried about grave robbers to bury him in the public burying ground. Interestingly, this story is told partially in the present, based on the experiences of real estate workers in the 1980's. The guide produced a pair of photographs, one normal looking with a woman alone in front of a door, one with a bright spectral presence in the photo. This was shown as a lingering scar of the hysteria, a supernatural manifestation of the prior events. While the guide equivocated on whether the presence was Corwin or one of his victims, he was clear on the supernatural form of the whole thing.

Alongside this, the narrative explores the robbery of a later resident of Philip English's house and some of the general aspects of the hysteria period such as the

role of John Hathorne, and his relationship to Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the absence of witches in the burying ground. However, at the end, Hocus Pocus Tours focuses on the general conditions of the hysteria. Standing down the street from the Witch Trials Memorial, the guide describes the combination of factors that allowed the hysteria to happen, focusing on the fearful conditions post-Indian war and the lack of a current legal charter from England undermining the proper functioning of the judicial system. Fundamentally, the hysteria is a tragedy of human proportions, one based on the wicked acts committed by corrupt individuals rather than a manifestation of a regular justice system.

Hocus Pocus Tours Analysis

Hocus Pocus Tours narrative is interesting as it focuses on more than just the events of 1692, but in a way that links later events to the watershed moments at the end of the Seventeenth century. This broad focus paradoxically draws more specific focus on the events of 1692, as it is shown as an event with profound lasting consequences for a community.

This historical narrative has several interesting characteristics. One aspect of this involves the methodology of presentation. Rather than providing a continuous wandering narrative, Hocus Pocus Tours' narrative emerges in a smaller set of in depth narratives at specific sites. This method split history into demonstrative episodes, each illustrative of a continued theme in Salem history. The division of history into discrete segments within a singular narrative extends a larger view of the linked nature of history. If the individual events of history can be

so divided from each other, then the division between present and history can be bridged through narrative tools.

A worldview is revealed in these narratives—both those that deal with the events of 1692 and those that come afterwards—in which corrupt and greedy individuals perpetrate acts of violence based on opportunity. Servants rob a rich master, a corrupt Sheriff presses an innocent man to death to take his land, a merchant steals the body of his accuser for ransom. These narratives, based as they are in local history, reveal a world where crises are driven by human frailties and the Salem Witch Hysteria is an example of this, driven by the greed of Sheriff Corwin.

Interestingly, Hocus Pocus Tours takes an oppositional position on media attention. At a stop at the intersection of Essex Street and Washington Street, the tour guide invites the audience to consider the statue of Samantha Stevens from *Bewitched*. “What do we remember here in Salem, but a sitcom witch?” This focus on the strength of real historical material and the faulty nature of fictional presentation follows a model seen in the advertisements for the Tours which use the phrasing that “The Truth is Simply Scary!” Their truth is not just a structural crisis, but—to paraphrase another 20th century media product—the evil that lurks in the hearts of men.

Performances

The final category of *historia* that I will be examining is the hardest to categorize specifically. While all of the prior performances could be classified as performances of a sort, the remaining *historia* are far more explicitly framed in such a manner, presenting material for an audience not based on historical landmarks or recreations but based on the aesthetic organization of material. These performances, while explicit about the relationship between material and narrative, also provide a complicated case for logical extension. In one case, the material is deliberately microcosmic, focusing on a deep presentation of a single event as insightful for the entire situation, in the other, the material is very much universal, including specific local material only as part of a much larger narrative.

Despite, or perhaps because of, this necessity of focus, the performances themselves provide much deeper allegorical material than others. As both narratives must expend the effort within to connect the included material to the larger narrative of Salem, they use that momentum to connect either inward or outward more directly. The explicitly relational material contained within proves to be more than just a narrative of history but an allegory in more than just interpretation.

Cry Innocent

What were the effects of the witch hunts, particularly on their principal victims, elderly women? Most older accounts ended on a note of relieved discontinuity, implying that for all their horror and violence, the main result of the trials was to discredit magical beliefs by taking them to their extreme. More recent historians have linked the witch trials to the sociocultural transition to the modern world; by permitting communal obligations to be repudiated, accusations resolved 'fundamental questions as to the nature and structure of the social order...on the side of individual freedom.'

—Edward Bever

Amidst the bustling tourists on the main pedestrian thoroughfare on the morning of November first, 2008, a college student wearing breeches and a vest mounted a short metal post, and called out to the assembled masses. ‘Good folks, I have news for you. I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that a ship has arrived from England with goods and news. The bad news is that a number of savages were found wandering the streets last night, led by a woman who called herself “Sarah Palin.” Additionally, some of you may have heard accusations whispered around the town, they say that the girls of the Parris household are afflicted by witchcraft.’

As the crowd assembles to hear the news, another actor in colonial dress steps forward and reads an indictment from a scroll seeking a suspect to be identified by her red bodice. Actors in colonial dress planted throughout the crowd react in shock at the accusation, turning to passersby, ‘He can mean none by Goody Bishop,’ ‘she is always walking around in that red bodice, bold as brass,’ ‘Have you seen her?’ Gradually, as the crowd of inquiring actors, bewildered pedestrians and ticket holders awaiting the upcoming show look about, another college student, this one wearing a long skirt, bonnet and red bodice steps forward, asking about the commotion. The actress is recognized as Bridget Bishop and arrested on the spot, brought, chained, through the streets of Salem to the Old town hall building, passing street magicians, merchants booths selling knit goods and the work of local artists and two Andean bands performing and selling CDs. The audience follows her, surrendering their tickets to other colonially dressed college students and

making their way upstairs to the large meeting room, full of chairs, two wide blocks in the middle stretching back to the far end of the room and chairs set along the raised portions of the floor underneath the large picture windows on the side, leaving three aisles, one in the middle and two on the sides.

The audience, mainly high school-age children and family groups, settles into their seats facing a makeshift courtroom setup. On one side, a docket is set up, on the other, a desk. From downstairs, the sound of singing is heard and the cast of the play, save Bridget Bishop, walk onto stage, singing an old hymn while accompanied by a bodhran. Lining up before the audience, they break into a cacophonous, multi-vocal, Greek chorus, bringing forth the attitude of the town, touching on issues such as the controversy over Samuel Parris, the illness of the teenage girls and finally the accusation of witchcraft. One of the actors steps forth assuming the role of trial magistrate Colonel John Hathorne, sets the scene, implores the audience—in their role as grand jury for the court of Oyer and Terminer—to pay close attention and ask questions, and the dramatic action begins. The play itself is a dramatization of a pre-trial hearing from Bridget Bishop's trial for witchcraft. In the play, the actors play a succession of witnesses, all brought forward to testify as to Bridget Bishop's guilt or innocence. Throughout, Bishop and John Hathorne trade adlibbed jibes about her accusers, interact with the audience and generally try to sway the jury to their side. Within the play, there is both scripted presentation and ad-libbed material. I will first present the scripted

framework, and then talk about some of the witnessed variations in the play structure as part of the description of the performance.

The play first presents evidence of accusations of an attack by Bishop on one of her neighbors followed by an examination of her cloak for holes. A parade of witnesses follows—played by the small troupe of actors through changes in costume and mannerism—presenting information for the jury. The lines presented here are excerpted from the script to give a sense of the trajectory of witness testimony.

Alice Pickering (midwife and medical examiner) “I, being commanded by Colonel John Hathorne for to view the bodies of Bridget Bishop, Rebecca Nurse, Elizabeth Proctor and others, by diligent search have discovered an unnatural excrescence of flesh much like to a teat and not usual in women, and that they were in all three women near the same place.

John Louder (neighbor to Bishop)-I had had some controversy with Bridget Bishop about her poultry which used to wander over into my garden. Words were spoken between us. A short while after that, one evening after I had gone to bed, I felt a heavy weight on my breast, so that I woke up. As God is my witness I clearly saw Bridget Bishop—or else her specter—sitting on my stomach. She seized me by the throat and began choking me, and stifled me like that almost until daybreak.

Susanna Sheldon (friend of the afflicted girls)-In the night, I was awakened by a presence in my room. There were Goody Bishop, Mrs. English and Goodman Cory standing by my bed, and a man in black with a high crowned hat. They had books in their hands, and Goody Bishop was compelling me to touch her book.

John Cook (Harvard Scholar)-One morning about sun rising, as I was in bed before I rose, I saw Goodwife Bishop stand in the chamber by the window. And she looked on me and grinned on me, and presently struck me on the sides of the head, which did very much hurt me. And then I saw her go under the end window, out a little crevice as big as I could thrust my hand into.

These testimonies are followed by a period of audience questioning, in which audience members are encouraged to give the performers opportunities to expand on their testimony. After this, the next set of witnesses came forward.

William Stacy (laborer for Bishop)-Bridget Bishop hired me to do some work for her around the house—for which she paid me. Three pence. Now as I was walking home, I had not gone more than three or four rods distance before I discovered that the money, which I had put in my pocket, had disappeared.

John, William and Rebecca Bly (laboring family) J: That woman there hired my son and me to tear down the cellar walls in her and Thomas Oliver's house...We got to working on the job, knocking down the stones and such, when my son William here found a little niche that had been made...and in there, you see he found these cloth dolls. J: I should have mentioned how I bought a sow from Edward Bishop, husband of this here Bridget...Now he told me to just give the money for the sow to Jeremiah Neale of Salem...I paid him the money...Now I don't know what they talked about it or not but this Bridget Bishop was not pleased with that arrangement of paying. She come over to our house—R:she raised such a fuss about the money, saying we were cheating her, and quarrelling until you could hear her across the way...J:So we recalled Bridget Bishop when the sow pigged, you see, because the pig was taken with strange fits.

Richard and Elizabeth Coman (Salem residents)-Sometime about eight years since, I was in bed with my wife, Elizabeth, at Salem. There was a light burning in the room, and I was awake, when Goody Oliver(Bishop's name from a previous marriage) came into the room...Two women were with her which were strangers to me, but Goody Oliver I knew—Goody Bishop. She was in her red bodice...She came and lay upon me and oppressed me so that I couldn't speak or stir, not even to waken my wife.

A second period of questioning followed this set of witnesses, in which the audience was again encouraged to elicit more testimony from the witnesses. After this, several more witnesses were brought forward.

Rev. John Hale (former defender of Bishop in earlier trial) I would ask each member of this assembly to be steadfast in your prayers—for Goodwife Bishop, and for our entire community.

Abigail Hobbs (madwoman and confessed witch)-It was Goody Oliver [who tempted me to practice witchcraft further]; she would have me set my hand to the book; but I would not. Neither did I consent to hurt the children again.

While the script for the performance called for a period of questioning, the performers did not use this period, instead bringing on the last of the witnesses and opting to have a single, final question time.

Sarah Shattuck(Quaker neighbor of Bishop) Several months after the first of this illness, there came a stranger to my house and pitied this child, and said, among other words, ‘this child is bewitched.’ He said, ‘You have a neighbor that is a witch.’ I said we had no neighbors but what were honest folk. He replied “You have a neighbor who has had a falling out with you, and who thinks you are a proud woman. She would bring down your pride in this child.”

Following this, a final question period was allowed, followed by Bishop’s attempt to defend herself by saying the Lord’s Prayer. In her performance, she fails to say ‘but deliver us from evil’, omitting part of the prayer and thus failing a common exonerating test. The audience is asked at this point if they heard her say the missing phrase, calling out the nature of heard evidence as a faulty method.

After the witnesses and evidence are brought forward and the audience/jury is given the chance to question them, the audience is asked to vote on whether there

is enough evidence for a trial, reminded of their responsibility to the county and Bridget is either freed or held for trial.

While much of the performance—testimony, introduction, closing—was conducted according to script, it also allowed for a great deal of variation between performances, with actors responding to questions from the audience and the vagaries of performance. While some of these were small variations, for instance the prop manacles with which Bishop was bound throughout the play at one point fell off, causing a pause—in which the actors remained in their characters—in which Bishop was re-manacled, other variations were more significant.

These significant variations all followed a general principle of heightened engagement, focused as they were on maintaining trial legitimacy in the face of questioning. This was highlighted by the responses to several attempted disruptions by the audience. In one case, several members of a high school group attempted to put forward one of their own as Bridget Bishop's absent husband, claiming her innocence on the grounds that she was with him those nights. Hathorne listened to disruptive remarks, commented that such discussions were unfit for mixed company, and asserted the possibility that Bishop could have given the Devil permission to walk about in her shape. In this way, the trajectory of the narrative was maintained, the legitimacy of the trial was preserved through explanation of offered evidence and the disruption was first acknowledged and then neutralized. This principle of acknowledge and neutralize disruption came up in another attempted interruption during a question period. A middle aged man with

a thick Bostonian accent stood from the audience and addressed Hathorne, challenging the denominational authority, the Christian-ness of witch persecution and the use of an Irish drum (bodhran) to accompany the hymn as the actors entered. Hathorne maintained character and asserted the rightness of witch persecution, highlighting its long tradition and its legal basis. The question about the drum was dismissed as lacking basis, and the disruption was interrupted.

In general however, the variable aspects of the show were focused around engagement between performers and audience, bringing the audience into the process of the trial, to make them part of the performance. The initial deputizing of an audience member to hold the key to the manacles, the inclusion of audience questions in the trial process and the eventual selection of the outcome are all performance variables that give the audience a sense of investment in the performance.

Cry Innocent Analysis

Cry Innocent is a highly focused performance in relation to the trials. While the events of the trials take place over fifteen months, the events of *Cry Innocent* are written to take place in a single day, particularly early in the process of the trials. Bishop's Oyer and Terminer hearing was two months before any of the executions of the trials and before most of the imprisonments, though the testimony given is drawn from depositions delivered between April and June (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* 1972). Bishop was only one part of the larger phenomenon

but the performance in many ways tries to use that event to encapsulate a larger story about the event through a highlighting of certain aspects of the trial and a downplaying of others. This draws in the focus of the performance, presenting it as a unified action on the part of a community rather than a series of sporadic testimonies.

The first aspect highlighted in the performance is the legal/procedural aspect of the trial. Rather than an obscure and imaginary set of events, the status of the trials as a legal process is highlighted. Following court procedures quickly recognizable to anyone who has watched television in the last fifty years, the performance presents a series of witnesses providing testimony, in many ways highlighting the mundane nature of the trial process.

The aspect downplayed in combination is the role of the afflicted girls. Within the performance, the girls who stand as accusers to Bishop stand silent, presented as a set of chairs off to the side. While this is presented within the performance as preventing the likely distracting nature of a group of screaming teenagers, it has the side effect of placing the accusations in the voices of authoritative members of the community. Together, this shifts the focus of the trial from an action by a small group to an action by a community.

This characteristic is backed up in performance by the repeated calls to legal legitimacy through procedure. Overall, the trial is framed as a legitimate conflict between Bishop and the community around her, framed in the performances subtitle "The People vs. Bridget Bishop." As the series of accusations is brought

against her, each testimony seems to highlight the way in which Bishop served again and again as a bad neighbor, critical and querulous, proud and greedy. Bishop's trial seems to be an outgrowth of a community conflict over what it means to be a member. This is complicated by the involvement of the audience in the performance.

By giving the audience the final word in the play, the culpability of the community is highlighted. The script of the play presents the options available at the conclusion of the trial as such,

HATHORNE: We must now take a counting of the assembly to determine whether or not to hold Bridget Bishop for trial. Please bear in mind that a vote to commit her for trial is not a vote to convict her of witchcraft. Based only on the testimonies which you in this room on this day, those who feel that Bridget Bishop should be help for a formal trial on this charge, manifest it by a sign of lifting up your hands.

[counting is taken] Thank you. Again based only on the testimonies presented here today, those who feel that there is no evidence to warrant that Bridget Bishop be formally tried on this charge, signify so by a show of hands.

[counting is taken]

[if held for trial] Hear now our recommendation. The magistrates and citizens of our sovereign Lord and Lady the King and Queen, on this 19th day of April, 1692, by a vote of [x to y] do consider that there is sufficient evidence to show that Bridget Bishop may have exercised and practiced witchcraft upon the bodies of Mercy Lewis and others. She will be committed to Salem Jail until her trial.

[CONSTABLE HERRICK hauls BRIDGET away through the room

BRIDGET: God will give you blood to drink!

[if not held for trial] HATHORNE:...consider that there is not sufficient evidence to hold Bridget Bishop for a trial on the charge of witchcraft. You are free to go.

[HATHORNE gives key to CONSTABLE HERRICK, who unlocks defendant; BRIDGET exits through audience]

Be forewarned, Bridget Bishop, that if additional evidence or testimony should come to light concerning these charges against you, do not be surprised if you are summoned once again to make answer before us and this assembly.

[after Bridget is gone] What will be the issue of these troubles, God only knows. I am afraid that ages will not wear off those stains which these things will leave behind on our land.

The necessity of enough people condemning Bishop to make the trials proceed, along with the inclusion of the audience in the process lays out a clear message, frequently attributed to Edmund Burke, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” By making the ending of the play variable, the play becomes an anti-teleological statement, highlighting that the trials required significant community participation to gain the momentum they did.

In general, *Cry Innocent* is a play about the way in which modern judicial practice protects those accused for spurious reasons. Multiple reminders within the play of the official legal role of the court, not to condemn the accused, merely to say whether there is enough evidence to warrant investigation, pushes the legal nature of the trials, while testimony that falls outside the bounds of modern courtroom procedure either based on relevance or believability serves as criticism of the past system and valorization of the modern system. Puritan justice as presented is community oriented, superstitious and above all, procedural. In *Cry Innocent*, Bishop is not the victim of a howling hysterical mob, but of a community seeking revenge against a troublemaker with the help of the audience.

Within The Witching Hour



Both medical historians and feminists have argued, from virtually opposite points of view, that the victims of the witch-craze were really the midwives and healers of peasant society.

—Richard Horsley

Down Liberty Street from the Witch Trials Memorial, people crowd around in lines. Some wait outside the wax museum, some wait for a haunted house, some wait for tickets to the three events on the street, some wait to purchase hot cider and hand-cut french-fries from the street vendors. I find myself at the head of a line into the back door of a store attended by three women in flowing skirts with pentacle pendants over their peasant blouses. As the line grows, one of the women passes down the line handing each person a short piece of string, warning each participant to hold onto the string for it will be used in the performance.

At the appointed time, 11:30 AM, a break from what is traditionally referred to as 'the witching hour,' the audience is escorted into the back room of the Witch Village store. The room itself is small with a makeshift altar containing candles, a knife, a bell, and various dried herbs set up against the northern wall. In the center of the room, a cauldron is set up with a number of objects protruding. All of this is surrounded by a circle, painted with zodiac symbols and surrounded by stones demarking the performance space from the audience space. As the audience files in, the room fills, with the audience shoulder to shoulder, some people sitting on the floor, some pressed up against the wall, all looking inward on the center, where one of the women from outside stands, waiting for people to come in.

With the room filled, the woman begins. "We are our healers, your midwives, your priestesses, your wise crones." She intones as she walks clockwise (deosil in Neo-Pagan parlance) around the cauldron filled with ritual tools in the center of the circle. She continues for about 20 minutes reciting in rhyming couplets, alternating

between explanations of the history and practice of modern witchcraft such as the Wiccan use of the pentacle to represent the combination of five elements in humanity and the general nature of historical witches and ritual such as the invocation of the four cardinal directions and of the goddess and god. Participants are told about the general execution of accused witches by the church during the middle ages as a form of social control on the part of a patriarchal society. Audience members are invited throughout to participate in a call in response to ritual invocations, repeating “So mote it be” as the ritual progresses.

Partway through the performance, the performing witch invites the audience to draw out the strings they received in line. She speaks of the nature of magic, telling the audience of the rule of three—that any magic worked for harm will return on the caster threefold—exhorting the audience to follow the Wiccan maxim, harming none. Then, with audience help, she casts a spell into the string, offering them a view into magic, helping them place their wishes into their strings as they tie three knots into the short length.

With that finished, the witch closes the ritual with a strong urging of the audience towards a renewed sense of magic in the world but also of tolerance, invoking “the legacy of Salem’s tragic past” and asking that “Intolerance and fear must be put away” in order to “Make this world a better place/ for all the children of the human race,” finally ending with “Namaste.” After a period of open questioning, the audience is released into the Witch Village gift shop and another set of people is brought in to experience the same spell.

Within the Witching Hour Analysis

Within the Witching Hour is, out of all the performances witnessed, the least explicitly about the Salem Witch Hysteria. The spell itself makes only passing mention to the events of 1692, with a reference to ‘the legacy of Salem’s tragic past’, but instead frames the specific events of Salem’s past and present within a larger narrative of witch persecution. Within this narrative, the modern practitioners are framed as inheritors of a tragic legacy seeking a peaceful future of free practice and tolerance.

One way of observing this argument comes in the presentation of authority in advertisement. The “Indoor Guided Tour Given by Practicing Witches” is advertised on flyers throughout the town with interesting language of authority

“Enter the village on a journey back in time to discover both myths and facts regarding the subject of Witchcraft. Confront the realities of medieval hysteria & superstitions. Learn some of the truths behind the legends and traditions. Then discern[sic] for yourself what being a ‘witch’ really means and who the witches really were.” (Witch Village advertisement)

“Walk the Witches hour with Salem’s original keeper’s[sic] of mystical lore. Led and produced by TRUE LOCAL WITCHES. A mystical tour of burying grounds and a live spell casting performed by practicing witches. Only in Salem!” (Witching hour advertisement, all formatting in original)

In these advertisements meant to entice audiences to attend the performance, the performance is presented as being an overall negotiation of the nature of Witchcraft accusation. By calling into question both the potential meaning of witch and other information on the trials, the Salem Witch Hysteria is

brought into question as a distinct or discrete event, allowing a presentation of the overall persecution as a larger phenomenon.

In this narrative, Salem is an outgrowth of the European trials, the legendary 'burning times' of Neo-Pagan scholarship. Invoking the concept of tradition, the performers become heirs, contesting the legacy of the past through practice. This parallels the relationship with historical material seen in Sabina Magliocco's *Witching Culture*.

They draw on many different cultural and historical traditions, from European folk customs to the religions of Classical antiquity, ancient Egypt, the Celts, and the Norse, occasionally mixing in material appropriated from Native American or Afro-Caribbean traditions. Material from these sources is used for a variety of purposes: to create a link to the historical past, imagined as a more spiritually authentic time; as a symbol of Euro-American ethnic identity and affiliation; to help bring about altered states of consciousness and activate the autonomous imagination; and to create a satisfying oppositional culture where such experiences and aesthetics are valued. (Magliocco 2004, 7)

This method of history is characteristic of much Neo-Pagan cultural practice. Historical and textual material is used to create a broader link to the past, creating a grand narrative of history in which modern Neo-Pagan experiences are an extension of an idealized Pre-Christian past.

Their presentation follows closely the narrative called the 'Myth of Wicca' by Margot Adler in her seminal *Drawing Down the Moon*,

Many have observed that myths should never be taken literally. This does not mean that they are 'false,' only that to understand them one must separate poetry from prose, metaphorical truth from literal reality.

The Wiccan revival starts with a myth, one that Bonewits used to call—much to the anger of many Witches—‘the myth of the Unitarian, Universalist, White Witchcult of Western Theosophical Britainy.’

It goes something like this: Witchcraft is a religion that dates back to Paleolithic times, to the worship of the god of the hunt and the goddess of fertility. One can see remnants of it in cave paintings and in the figurines of goddesses that are many thousands of years old. This early religion was universal. The names changed from place to place but the basic deities were the same.

When Christianity came to Europe, its inroads were slow. Kings and nobles were converted first, but many folk continued to worship in both religions. Dwellers in rural areas, the ‘Pagans’ and ‘Heathens,’ kept to the old ways. Churches were built on the sacred sites of the Old Religion. The names of the festivals were changed but the dates were kept. The old rites continued in folk festivals, and for many centuries Christian policy was one of slow cooptation.

During the times of persecution the Church took the god of the Old Religion and—as is the habit with conquerors—turned him into the Christian devil. The Old Religion was forced underground, its only records set forth, in distorted form, by its enemies. Small families kept the religion kept the religion alive and, in 1951, after the Witchcraft Laws in England were repealed, it began to surface again.

...

Until about a decade ago most of the Wicca took almost all elements of the myth literally. Few do so today, which in itself is a lesson in the flexibility of the revival. Many scholars refuted the literal accuracy of the myth and then wrongly dismissed the modern Craft itself as a fraud. This they still tend to do (Adler 2006, 45-46).

In this way, the practice of the spell is framed as heritage and a conflict is set up in which benevolent folk practice is placed in opposition to cruel authoritarian justice. Witchcraft is genealogy and allows a form of resistance. This linkage is both troubling and fraught with potential. As Sylvia Bovenschen, witchcraft historian, says,

To elevate the historical witch *post festum* to an archetypal image of female freedom and vigor would be unimaginably cynical, considering the magnitude of her suffering. On the other hand, the revival of the witch's image today makes possible a resistance which was denied to historical witches (Bovenschen 1978, 87).

In this way, the universality of the *Within the Witching Hour* narrative proves to strengthen both the specific and general cases made within. While they do not claim to speak specifically for the victims of Salem themselves, they claim a level of solidarity as resistance denied to those accused in 1692. By claiming a need for a broader freedom of practice than was given to the earlier accused, they argue for the benefits of increased tolerance in a way that reaches back to make a tacit claim that in a more egalitarian society such persecution would not occur.

In this way, Salem becomes a focus for a larger narrative of resistance, strongly based on a systemic view of western religious and scientific history. Salem is a case study for a larger phenomenon, not an event itself. This performance, more than any other, explicitly frames the possibilities of resistance to recurrence, telling us what we must avoid to prevent such problems in the future.

However, the nature of the performance provides an interesting caveat. In a tacit sense, the admonishments against malicious magical practice admit the potential guilt of those persecuted in Salem. While other narratives exclude the possibility of effective magic and recognize guilt only as an outgrowth of psychosomatic superstition on the part of perpetrator and victim, the acknowledged (though problematized) existence of malignant magic provides a possible guilt for some or all of the perpetrators. While the performance in no ways endorses the

actions taken in 1692 as just, it does allow guilty to be a legitimate verdict. This level of complication shows some of the way in which the narrativizing process of history creates unexpected parallels in a way that has profound consequences for the study of *historia*.

Chapter 7- Conclusion: Consuming History

Events can be recalled only if they (or their mode of narrative) fit within a framework of contemporary interests. Society, in turn, modifies recollections according to its present needs. Social beliefs are collective recollections, and they relate to a knowledge of the present.

- Liliane Weissberg



The story of Salem is told in T-Shirts. All over town, people wear shirts bought in Salem, shirts that link Salem to any number of identities and causes. Some are just for fun, like the Smiley face with the witch hat, a Salem of pleasure in history. Some make reference to the feminist past, with slogans like “Girls Night Out” over a witch figure or “Good Girls Go to Heaven...Bad Girls Go to Salem,” a Salem of

female empowerment in the face of centuries of brutal oppression. Some are explicitly religious, such as the shirt with a pentacle in Celtic knot style with the words “Blessed Be” written above and “Salem, MA” written below, a Salem of Pagan pride, a past linked to millennia of folkloric tradition.

These shirts are sold on every street in Salem, in dedicated stores, in temporary carts, in the gift shops of museums. People throughout Salem wear them, literally wearing their historical allegiances on their (short) sleeves. In Salem, your historical perspective is as simple as wearing a T-shirt.

Multiple scholars have addressed the relation between history and people. More and more, history has become about the question of contact, the way in which historical debates become knowledge. Works such as Martha Norkunas’ *The Politics of Public Memory* and David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig’s *The Presence of the Past* have opened up discussions of the localized presentation of history and the public’s interaction with historical knowledge. However, Salem provides a number of interesting differences that illuminate some of the conditions of history in America. These differences emerge in two ways. First, they emerge in the multi-vocal nature of the historical performances. Salem is not a single historical example with a central organization presenting the history. Salem is multiple narratives with different perspectives and different themes existing in a multi-vocal discourse. Second, the differences emerge in the way in which people interact with this history. Instead of presenting histories at non-profits and through free material, in

Salem, history is a business, one based on the idea of attracting customers to consume multiple narratives.

So first, what do the Salem *historia* say? What are the lessons presented and how do the tourist performances in Salem represent a larger sense of American identity within the performance? The larger context of Salem *historia* provides a discursive model of the lessons of early American 'justice' and the trajectory of American society. This model emerges in individual narratives based on the narrative process present in the performative aspect of *historia*. By presenting a unified historical event, *historia* performers embed specific meanings into their narratives that link to larger questions of American identity and society. This broad context provides a milieu in which tourism becomes audience engagement in narrative as a way of understanding history through discourse.

In short, each of these six performances takes a disparate set of events that take place in a complex context and creates for consumption a discrete narrative with beginning and end framed by performance. The narratives do this by focusing the events of the hysteria into a simplified set of events generally focused around one person or set of people. While the events are arguably linked, the key word in that phrase is arguably. Natural links do not exist between events but are constructed based on principles of cause and effect that emerge in the process of turning events into narratives. In this way, history is made consumable, changing a series of events into a representational model of history that is a performative act of historical narrative as presented earlier in the outlining of the practice of history

in the *historia*. One of the most important characteristics of the *historia* is that it is like bite-size history, able to be digested as a unified tale. This process is similar to what Alice Kessler Harris outlines in her article “Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate.”

Like the process of construction on a personal level, creating a national image requires us to make conscious and unconscious decisions about what to include and exclude. It asks of us a negotiation between our efforts to retain the particular sense of self that links us to a special tradition and the efforts of such cultural forces as schools and the mass media to impose a sense of commonality that threatens to reduce us to what we share (Kessler-Harris 1992, 344).

From History to Narrative

However, the mere existence of unification does not show the way in which said unification creates a discursive environment in Salem, the choices made within each individual performance alter the trajectory of each performance in a way that creates six completely different narratives about the same event, not a single unifying narrative. The first choice that affects the overall nature of each narrative is the choice of protagonist. In each narrative, one or two people are highlighted as exemplary, creating a specific center to the story. For the *Witch History Museum*, George Burroughs is the focus, with multiple episodes from his judicial process presented in the narrative. For the *Salem Witch Museum*, Ann Putnam Jr. serves as protagonist, with the narrative beginning in her living room and ending with her confession of guilt. The *Salem Historical Tours* focuses on the accusations against Bridget Bishop and Tituba, pointing out the faulty nature of each. For the *Hocus Pocus Tours*, the narrative focuses on the story of Philip English and George

Corwin, exploring multiple points of contact between the two. *Cry Innocent* frames their narrative around the contact between Bridget Bishop and John Hathorne in an amalgamated trial. For *Within the Witching Hour* no individual is mentioned within the narrative, creating a strictly universalist tale.

By choosing focus, narratives are framed around individualized and subjective representations of historical events. The story of George Burroughs is different than that of Bridget Bishop; the tale of Tituba differs from that of Philip English. But this focus, drawing a line around certain events as relevant or expressible also creates the irrelevant or inexpressible. Each narrative creates its own conditions for relevance that influence the potential material of the narrative. While this is sometimes explicit, in each narrative, materials are excluded for purposes of unity. For the *Witch History Museum*, the focus on the story of Burroughs obscures the overall gendered nature of witch persecution. As the only victim shown, Burroughs non-gendered experience of power becomes a representation for all experiences. In the *Salem Witch Museum* narrative, the role of authorities such as judges and law enforcement are downplayed based on the general focus on the accusing girls. The accused are shown with shadows of their accusers behind them, which obscure the role of the justice system in the resultant persecution. Both *Salem Historical Tours* and *Hocus Pocus Tours* ignore the participants in the trials by focusing on the events of the hysteria as a series of sited actions. The physical action of the trials is obscured without direct geographical reference to either courtroom or gallows.

Cry Innocent is explicit about part of what it ignores, presenting the afflicted girls as silent presences within the courtroom. However, it also excludes those accused later with significantly different experiences than Bishop, through its focus on the beginnings of the trials. While the *Within the Witching Hour* performance focuses on nobody specifically, it also obscures all individual experiences through its universal focus. Instead of an event about individuals with agendas, all actors are presented through the lens of patriarchal repression.

This choice of relevant and irrelevant material comes from different sources. It can be active choice, as in the case of the girls in *Cry Innocent*. It can be a restriction of form, as in *Within the Witching Hour*, with ritual performance generally not lending itself to particular individual focus. It can be a matter of lack of material, as in the case of the walking tours lacking a gallows hill for display that would allow a focus on the executions. However, through the choice of materials, a larger narrative begins to be constructed in each case.

These larger narratives, in their attempt to push a generalized relevance of the Salem Witch Hysteria, construct a central causative conflict that presents a logic for historical action based on the demands of narrative, with effects emerging from causes. In none of these narratives is the hysteria a random event, but in all cases it is based on a causative conflict. These causative conflicts present the first indications of larger consequences of the events presented within by using the objects of focus to tell a larger story.

The story of the *Witch History Museum* is a conflict of superstition versus sense. The absurdity of witchcraft belief is presented as a root cause for the events, arising not from interpersonal conflict, but from societal fears of magical practice. The *Salem Witch Museum* presents a narrative of idle pettiness versus personal virtue, with the games of the girls spiraling out of control in a way that led to the death of the innocent and the virtuous.

The *Salem Historical Tours* gives as central narrative conflict a clash between petty agendas of greed and bitterness and official outside oversight that could have prevented the troubles. This frames the conflict as community versus government with the internal clashing with the external. The *Hocus Pocus Tours* focuses the conflict as greed versus honesty, placing the corruption of Sheriff Corwin against the honest wealth of merchant Philip English.

In *Cry Innocent*, the key conflict is one of community justice versus individual tolerance, based on the question of how far is it possible to go to punish a bad neighbor. In this, the conflict is a matter of personal liberty threatened by communal control, siding ultimately on the side of justice. In *Within the Witching Hour* the conflict is centered on violent structural patriarchy versus folkloric individualism. The overall system of witch persecution is at the heart of the debate, framed as a conflict between intolerance and tolerance.

Through the process of narration, focused around individuals in a way that reveals structural conflicts, a set of positions emerge. Each individual *historia* encodes a larger position of the Salem event as a model of generalized American

historical narrative. The expression of these conflicts presents a moral imperative, a lesson to be learned from the problem of history in a way that encodes an understanding of the relationship between the specific case of Salem and the generalized system of American history and colonial life.

For the *Witch History Museum*, the Salem hysteria is a grotesque example of the long road to enlightened justice. With its focus on the railroad justice of George Burroughs and the distinct role of accusations based on superstition and hearsay, the *Witch History Museum* places Salem in the realm of primitive past, a lesson learned, with America standing as an example of justice based not on the accusations of teenage girls and the beliefs of superstitious Puritans, but based on fairness and proof. Salem is a dividing line between medieval European superstition and modern American objective justice.

The *Salem Witch Museum's* dual narratives provide a model of society that focuses on the grim possibilities of social panic. The initial narrative focuses on the potential danger that a spurious accusation can bring through its focus on Putnam's arc of guilt, while the secondary narrative provides a context that places the overall model of witch persecution into a framework of American responses to crisis. At its heart, the *Salem Witch Museum* narrative is a narrative of individual historical process, where panics represent temporary problems to be solved in society. Within this worldview, such panics are an initial reaction, with American society moving beyond initial crisis to a sustained equilibrium of increased tolerance.

Within the narrative of the *Salem Historical Tours Witchcraft Walk*, Salem is presented as a primarily local conflict which got out of hand without sufficient oversight. As the minor petty motivations of those involved are explored, a model is presented that recognizes outside attention as both a way of exposing the truth and a model in which objective outside authority can outweigh subjective localized corruption. This model is focused around the crises of the powerless with a fundamental message that the role of the modern American government and culture is to protect those like Tituba and Bishop who could not protect themselves.

For *Hocus Pocus Tours*, the trials are connected with a longer narrative of Salem's history to express the way in which greed corrupts social systems. The continued conflict over property provides a model that can both undermine fair government and corrupt individual relationships. For *Hocus Pocus Tours*, the Salem events are not historically aberrant, but part of a constant characteristic of human society, at its heart victim to individual corruption. Through the valorizing of Philip English's actions of flight and ransom, the message of individual protection of property emerges as a central theme of American identity. In short, justice comes to those who make it for themselves rather than those who put trust in social systems to save them.

Cry Innocent uses Salem to tell a tale of community culpability. Bishop's trial was a case of how outdated systems of justice in place in the colonial period could easily be used to persecute innocent individuals in the name of protecting a community. By this, the American model of justice is a distinct move to try and

remove the personal from the system of judgment, with the differences highlighted through repetition. At the same time, good society requires good individuals to prevent bad actions and fundamentally to remember their responsibility to each other as a way of maintaining modern social order.

Finally, *Within the Witching Hour* places Salem in a larger context to illustrate a general principle. The persecution of witches in Salem is part of a much larger model of structural patriarchal persecution of women and folkways, resulting in a loss of valuable folk knowledge and expertise. As part of this general cultural history, Salem can be an object lesson in the cost of intolerance, the possibility of moving beyond the repressive modes of the past and a call to return to ancestral folkways as a corrective action for years of oppression.

Each of these narratives provides one voice in the multi-vocal discourse of Salem's *historia*. Each version of the history is a focused narrative that argues a primary interpretation of events. What's more, they argue that the events of 1692 provide a template for broader historical interpretation, a way of viewing the intervening centuries based on similarities between events.

Consuming America

The secondary distinction of the *historia* narratives is the way in which people interact with them. Salem provides a place where narrative of Americanness can be interacted with, can be consumed, where the national narrative not only persists, but is available for purchase.

This interaction is where *historia* differ from other methodologies of historical presentation and is what makes the Salem situation remarkable. *Historia* challenge the notion of history and national character as pure products of academia. This mission is interesting in relation to the work of David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig on the interactions between individuals and historical narratives.

Thelen and Rosenzweig, examining the relationship between people and historical narrative, found that history played a significant part in the lives of the people they interviewed. According to their study “The Americans we talked with engaged the past to live their lives. As they thought about the kinds of people they wanted to be and the futures they wanted to carve for themselves, they turned to the past to frame their quests (Thelen and Rosenzweig 2000, 37).” In their study, they found that individuals showed significant investment in the experiences of the past living their life in relationship to history. However, Thelen and Rosenzweig did not find material in line with conventional historical narratives.

If the past was omnipresent in these interviews “History” as it is usually defined in textbooks was not. This absence of conventional historical narratives and frameworks surprised us. Roy recalls that he had assumed we would hear people talking about how the defeat of the South in the Civil War, the struggle to settle Montana, or the victory of the auto workers in the 1937 sit-down strikes shaped their identities or their current political views...But these stories weren’t there. Neither were the narratives of American national progress—the landing of the Pilgrims, the winning of the American Revolution, the writing of the Constitution, the settling of the West—that have been told for generations in grade school classes and high school textbooks. (Thelen and Rosenzweig 2000, 9)

Thelen and Rosenzweig saw, in the lives of those surveyed, a history unburdened by larger narratives, a history often personal and frequently present in the lives of participants without lessons.

Experiences did not come to respondents with prefabricated lessons; their meanings had to be made. They presented paradoxes and contradictions...They could be revisited and reinterpreted to address changing needs and desires. Respondents worked hard to make meanings: to recognize, recall, interrogate, and empathize (Thelen and Rosenzweig 2000, 38)

While interesting in light of their findings, this method of history without lessons, without larger narratives is not true in the Salem case, providing interesting exceptions to the pattern. In the Salem narratives, focused as they are around providing the relevance of the Salem events, historical events are parts of narratives with lessons.

In each of Salem narratives, American Character emerges from the combination of the descriptive impulse of humanity and the necessary limitation of individual narrative. By trying to represent historical events through narrative description, narrators reduce the events to a comprehensible set of differentiations which provides a model for extrapolation to the larger case. These histories are presented as experiences specifically with prefabricated lessons, with interpretations.

Individually, these narratives provide models of American Character as a central conflict expressed through individuals and a lesson to be learned in the long term, an American trajectory. Encoded within each narrative is a position within the longer narrative of America, a narrative based on establishing both contiguity

and distance. The fact that there is not a unified image of American Character does not mean that there is not American Character within these practices. The very expression of history in narrative provides a unifying force that creates an image of American Character.

These images of American Character are playful, in that they are presented as entertainment, variable, in that they produce different results, and above all, consumable. History is for sale in Salem. People come to Salem to spend money on historical narratives, in the form of 'museum' tours and performances, in the form of parties and walking tours, all to expose themselves to these narratives, to educate themselves on the historical events that make up America. Salem's audiences selectively consume historical narrative, patronizing certain stories and dismissing others. In this way, the audience retains the power of discourse, negotiating the vagaries through consumer activity. In other words, history is defined by the market. Tales indigestible or unpopular fail, tales that create a popular narrative succeed. But what's interesting is that audiences in Salem are not particularly loyal. With each performance lasting at most an hour, tourists will go to multiple performances, see multiple versions, and come home with a selective combination of perspectives on the trials.

This model provides an audience-centric concept of American Character, revealing the way that discourse is not simply engaged in by official performers and through professional analysis but by individuals in cultural contexts. Audiences recognize the nature of multi-vocal discourse, else why attend multiple

performances? This multi-vocal nature of national character is a postmodernization of culture, where audiences actively engage through consumption in a process of American Character negotiation.

Summation

Historia are not new. All of the ideas present in *historia* have been percolating in the academy for years. The concepts of discourse, national character and their presence in folklore have been around for years. The idea that people interact with history as a way of understanding their lives is well known in the academy. However, the situation of Salem provides a way of continuing these debates around a complex context. Observing the ways in which Salem (and transitively other consumer historical sites) provides a model of contact between people and history in a post-modern consumerist society gives insight into the way in which historical debates interact with the public sphere.

When narratives reduce complex historical events to representational narratives, they turn reality into story and open the gates for interpretation. When multiple versions emerge, history becomes discourse, discourse which produces a variety of cultural memory. Maria Sturken, in her book *Tangled Memories*, says

Cultural Memory can be distinct from history yet, I would argue, is essential in its construction. It is unwise to generalize about the practice of history-making; the profession of history encompasses a broad array of methodologies, many of which are critical of traditional historiography. History can be thought of as a narrative that has in some way been sanctioned or valorized by institutional frameworks or publishing enterprises. One cannot say that history comprises a single narrative; many histories are constantly under debate and in conflict with each other. (Sturken 1997, 4)

This view of cultural memory is both reinforced and challenged by Salem *historia* performances. What Salem provides is a model of such a debate at the heart of cultural memory conducted in the public sphere, using the methods of consumerism.

In his conclusion to *The Presence of the Past*, David Thelen outlines his perspective on the distance between professional history and the history in the minds of the public.

From our interviews, I have concluded that the greatest danger from professionalization—a danger that is great because it is often invisible—is that its self-enclosing thrust has made it harder for us professionals to recognize which of our practices resemble “common,” “local,” or “everyday” knowledge and perspective and which have evolved into jargon that makes sense only to other professionals. If we wish to construct serious dialogues about the past with nonprofessionals—who are, after all, our fellow citizens and human beings—we may need to go back and revalue our first languages, the ones we were taught to leave behind when we entered the professional world. By recognizing patterns in our historymaking practices that we share with others, we can more effectively contribute to the larger historical culture we all inhabit (Thelen and Rosenzweig 2000, 191)

In general, Salem provides an interesting opportunity, a way of rethinking these connections between professionals and publics. Rather than a history that is strictly personal and lacking in broad narratives, Salem provides narratives relevant to the broad case of America, narratives that show a bridge between the work of professional historians and the ‘common,’ ‘local,’ and ‘everyday’ historians. *Historia* provide that connection, showing the missing link in Thelan’s ‘historymaking’ practices. Salem provides an example where professional

interpretation creeps into personal experience, defining the contact experienced by the tourist.

So why does this matter? How do the Salem *historia* fit into the larger academy? Fundamentally, the Salem situation highlights a potential point where some of the questions present in folklore, history and American Studies can intersect. Reviving the potentials of early folklore study of national identity, addressing the complexities of history in contact with the public both individually and in groups and examining the trajectory of an American Studies without a consensus on American identity, Salem gives opportunities for further investigation on how such ideas develop when the public sphere meets the tourist economy. In a country defined by history and economic practice, the intersections of public sphere and market economy open new possibilities for discussion. In short, Salem shows a point of contact between ideas and culture, a locus of debate that moves ideas from the academic consciousness to the public one. In a world where history is up for grabs, all academics must deal with the consequences of such a situation.

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