The Stories We Tell:

Expanding Conceptions of Dark Tourism and Cultural Identity in America

By

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Abstract

This thesis explores dark tourism in the context of the construction of sociocultural identity in the United States. Examining how cultural attitudes shape memorialization practices, historic preservation of dark tourism properties and cultural resources reveals that the public is an equal partner in curating historical and cultural identity. Despite scholarship in other academic areas, there is a deficit of historic preservation work concerning dark tourism properties. This thesis utilizes an interdisciplinary approach by synthesizing scholarship from various academic fields that have touched on issues related to the relationship between cultural identity, American mythologies, historic preservation, and dark tourism. It examines case studies of properties connected to themes of death, suffering, and the supernatural through empirical history, American mythology, or both. This study also incorporates survey research that explores tour offerings in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, specifically as they pertain to fiction, folklore, and dark tourism as defined in leisure and tourism studies. History is shaped by the stories we tell, but the stories we tell, in turn, shape our understanding of history.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the individuals who guided and supported me through this lengthy process. Dr. Carroll Van West, thank you for all your guidance, wisdom, advice, and constant advocacy to listen to disenfranchised groups. You set a high standard for conscientious historic preservation work and inspire others to rise to that level. Dr. Susan Myers-Shirk, your instruction made me a better writer and researcher—skills that will serve me throughout my career. To Andy, Nore, and Aidan, thank you for your patience, understanding, love, and support throughout my academic career. I couldn't have done it without you.

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Preface

Geographical and Cultural Scope

The overwhelming majority of Dark Tourism scholarship has focused on Europe. This study is American-centric, focused on the American experience and relationship to American properties associated with death or suffering. Because the United States is so culturally diverse, there is not one American experience, but many. The general conclusions I will draw may not speak to every individual ethnic consideration. In the larger worldview, different cultures ascribe a vast variety of meanings and metaphors to death. It is apparent most dark tourism and thanatourism studies adopt a culturally myopic view, focusing primarily on European countries.

The Japanese, for instance, have no direct translation for grief. The nearest translations of *mo*, which refers to the rituals surrounding death, and *hitan*, which means sadness and sorrow, do not connect the two.[1] In Shinto faith, relatives of the dead ritually visit, honor, and care for the deceased on specified days and years after interment, which is often via cremation and depositing into a family grave. "The grave site is a place for family and friends to mourn the deceased and to reflect on the cycle of

[1] Encyclopedia of Death and Dying, "Grief and Mourning in Cross-Cultural Perspective," http://www.deathreference.com/Gi-Ho/Grief-and-Mourning-in-Cross-Cultural-Perspective.html#ixzz6nhHhXYWM.

life."[2] Likewise, the Mexican holiday Día de los Muertos is a lively festival celebrating life, death, and the living's connection with the dead. Brightly colored decorations adorn the gravesites visited. Cheerful music and a spirit of festivities characterize the days and nights of this holiday. Though directly focused on the dead, the celebration is anything but grim. Taoism believes the living descendants and dead ancestors are all a part of one family, with both looking after the other. Several Taoism festivals incorporate ancestor worship at their gravesites. The rituals are an essential part of the cultural norms and not engaging the dead would be seen as deviant. The existing scholarship rarely incorporates the cultural diversity surrounding our interactions with the dead.

Prior to the integration with mainstream society in the 1960s, the Wari tribe of Brazil honored their dead through ritualistic endo-cannibalism. Ethnographer Beth Conklin links this behavior to the love shown in life and memory in death through food.[3] Zoologist Bill Schutt makes it clear that this now-taboo practice has been carried out in many cultures across history in his book, *Cannibalism: A Perfectly Natural History.*[4]

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[2] eCondolence, "Shinto: Visiting the Cemetery," https://www.econdolence.com/learning-center/religion-and-culture/shinto/shinto-visiting-the-cemetery/#:~:text=Shinto%3A%20Matsuri,conducted%20by%20a%20Shinto%20priest.&text=Visiting%20the%20grave%20is%20done,the%20rituals%20of%20the%20faith.

[3] Mikel Burley, "Eating Human Beings: Varieties of Cannibalism and the Heterogeneity of Human Life," Philosophy 91, no. 4 (2016): 483-501, doi:10.1017/S0031819116000322. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/philosophy/article/abs/eating-human-beings-varieties-of-cannibalism-and-the-heterogeneity-of-human-life/1B196F3DC1B6AA25CAB730FEA1688976; Beth A. Conklin, *Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 27.

[4] Bill Schutt, *Cannibalism: A Perfectly Natural History* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2018).

This practice is echoed in the ritualistic taking of the Eucharist in Catholicism. However, I will be excluding most mainstream religious practices surrounding death, as they are carried out everywhere and do not have specific associations of place, beyond churches. While churches are certainly locations used by many to navigate our understanding of death, they perform so many other community functions that I will exclude them here.

Exclusion of Greater American Atrocities

Nor will this study focus on sites related to mass national atrocities such as chattel slavery of African and Caribbean peoples or the mass genocide of the indigenous peoples of North America. Similarly, the sites Naomi Kline calls "difficult places," which challenge societies to confront their past, like the murder place of Emmett Till or the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, sacred sites such as the Lorraine Motel or the Trail of Tears, inextricably linked to broader topics of racial history and justice are more significant issues and require more nuance and integration of larger systemic problems. The scale of these atrocities is such, I do not have space here to do them justice.

In the past few decades, there has been a good and necessary push for racial justice in historic preservation and to interpret and preserve places of pain that make us

confront the injustices of our past. The Slave Dwelling Project, for instance, seeks to "give voice to our ancestors and change the narrative, one slave dwelling at a time."[5]

Figure 1. Whitney Plantation Instagram post from June 24, 2020. See footnote 6 for text.

Some exemplary places require visitors to confront shameful truths in American history. The Whitney Plantation's director of marketing, Joy Banner, proclaimed via social media that the plantation never has and never will host weddings because they are a site of extreme racial violence that should not be romanticized.[6] Each step of interpretation involves discussing how enslaved peoples lived and died there. Sadly, Whitney Plantation is not the norm.

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[5] Slave Dwelling Project website. "About Us." https://slavedwellingproject.org/

[6] The Whitney plantation social media post text reads, "Over 350 people were enslaved at Whitney Plantation throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Our tour has always focused on the brutal labor and stolen freedom of those that created vast economic wealth for the enslaving families. We do not glamorize the Big House or the grounds. In addition to our mission to educate visitors and the larger community about slavery and its legacies, our site is a place of memory and reverence. Our on-site memorials list the names of individuals who were enslaved at Whitney, individuals who were enslaved throughout Louisiana, children who died during enslavement, and a memorial for the revolutionaries of the largest US slave revolt. For these reasons, the Big House has never been nor ever will be a wedding venue. Plantations are sites of immense cruelty and violence. We do not allow any event that would overshadow this reality and disrespect the memory of all those who suffered, labored, and died here."

This thesis considers properties more closely related to "spooky, creepy, horror, paranormal, or folklore" rather than atrocities. Additionally, I will not expand further on the historic preservation scholarship concerning cemeteries, since this is one of the few dark tourism areas sufficiently covered by preservationists.[7] There are so many more topics I feel belong as a part of this scholarship- including cryptids.

A Caveat Concerning Covid-19

I must also offer a caveat concerning Covid-19. Much contained herein was written in a pre-Covid world. The pandemic has impacted the tourism industry deeply and will continue to be for some time. Many smaller private places and guided tour companies have shuttered their business, inevitably leaving many more sites deeply struggling and vulnerable to demolition or disrepair through neglect.

[7] Association for Gravestone Studies website; Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014).

Introduction

"In the public eye, historic preservation is concerned with the beautiful, the heroic, and the uplifting." – Max Page, *Why Preservation Matters*[8]

Cultural identity in connection to historical sites and properties is the result of collaboration between historians and the public. Dark tourism connected in the United States is driven not just by empirical history, but is also influenced by the stories we tell as a society. Literature, folklore, film, art, and social attitudes are drivers for tourism and impact public funding and preservation efforts.

Historic preservationists must expand the view of what constitutes cultural identity, and therefore heritage, to take a truly inclusive approach to preservation and historical interpretation. We cannot escape cultural representations and associations and must recognize those identities are no less worthy of preservation than mainstream historical endeavors. The responsibility to identify these outliers is also one of diversity and inclusion for groups who kept oral traditions more often than written documents, with the potential consequence of obliteration. Dark or peculiar history sites are especially vulnerable and particularly neglected. Much in the same vein,

[8] Max Page, *Why Preservation Matters (*New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 130.

memorialization is carried out in line with cultural attitudes shaping the hierarchy of which deaths matter more or serve a purpose. To understand the complex issues surrounding dark tourism properties, we must explore several seemingly disparate concepts including dark tourism, how cultural attitudes shape preservation and memorialization, how magical thinking shaped early American culture, and the influence of American mythologies on the perception of any given place. These must all be considered to fully understand and examine the landscape of dark tourism sites in the United States.

In order to expand our concepts of cultural identity, we must accept the premise that any given "place," be it region, city, or individual site, has folklore and connections to fiction which are intrinsically tied to its history and tourism interests. The creation of space is a public and cooperative endeavor. How a place "feels" is arguably as important as its actual history. We must ask ourselves why some places and events become cemented in the collective memory?

Part two addresses issues in the management of these properties of adaptive reuse as an economic opportunity, poor private management and historical interpretation practices, reconstruction of sites of interest, successful private management, obliteration, and ethical considerations. These case studies also illustrate the importance of interplay between real sites; their history and physical settings, in the form of architectural elements or landscape; and the cultural imagination created by fiction and folklore. To appraise the auratic and experiential elements of dark historical

properties, these chapters blend of empirical research and notes derived from participant observation visits to a handful of dark tourism sites in person to engage with how they are being interpreted. The case studies are also contextualized by comparing the media that inform the public opinion of these historic sites with their empirically verifiable history.

To illustrate how the paranormal, fiction, and other practices are carried out, chapter thirteen integrates quantitative research-based survey data collected from historical tour and interpretation professionals living and working in New Orleans, Louisiana taken from the research collections of the McDoux Preservation LLC historic preservation consulting firm based in Houston, Texas.

Chapter One

Dark Tourism

Dark tourism is the visitation of sites or properties related to death or suffering. This broad spectrum includes death camps, battlefields, cemeteries, memorials, museums, dungeons, catacombs, disaster sites, haunted places, themed walking tours, true crime locations, or all manner of attractions. Unlike any given travel destination, death is exotic to everyone. This niche may be why dark tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of tourism.

I assert most dark tourism sites can be thusly categorized into subgroups dependent upon how we interact with them—*sacred, solemn,* and *spectacle*. Why do some places become venerated, and others take on a carnivalesque atmosphere? Examples of what I would consider *sacred* sites include Ground Zero in New York City or Gettysburg National Battlefield. As President Lincoln said in his address at Gettysburg, ". . . in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it,

far above our poor power to add or detract."[9] The auratic qualities of places where blood was shed *en masse* loom large in the national landscape, rendering them sacred ground.

The second category of *solemn* sites associated with death and suffering are often removed in place or transformed from their original horror. The United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. is a solemn site asking visitors to interact with these difficult topics in a somber and serious manner, though the actual site of death and suffering are removed by a continent. The Lorraine Motel in Memphis where the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated is another solemn site; while the tragic death did take place there, it has been transformed into the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel, which invites the community to bring together learning about the struggles of the past with social justice advocacy in the present.

The third category I would suggest is sites that have become *spectacles*. While Alcatraz was a harsh prison where many suffered and died, you can find rows of shops selling kitschy souvenirs along the San Francisco boardwalk, including inmate "striped pajamas" or "prison oranges" t-shirts proclaiming, "I escaped Alcatraz." These sites that explore the lighter side of death or suffering and are more often used as economic

[9] Abraham Lincoln, "Nicolay Copy of The Gettysburg Address," 1863, Holograph manuscript, Page 1, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. www.loc.gov/exhibits/gettysburg-address/exhibitionitems/Assets/Nicolay1_enlarge.jpg

drivers are the focus of this study. These curious sites mediate the macabre, dive into horrors real and imagined, and attempt to connect beyond the veil in less serious ways than the other categories listed here.

A great deal of the academic literature surrounding dark tourism pivots on trying to define and categorize it. For the purposes of this paper, I use the established term "dark tourism" as a larger umbrella for visiting properties whose primary interpretative and marketing thrust are associated with death, suffering, and the macabre. Other terms such as thanatourism (sites specifically associated with death), grief tourism (sites of specific death or resting places of specific individuals), and disaster tourism (sites visited in the wake of disasters) are useful subcategories, but dark tourism encompasses them all. It also makes room for spectacle sites that have a carnivalesque, playful atmosphere and the solemn, sacred sites; sites that are commemorative, with a defined endpoint, and those that extend their suffering into the present (such as active war zones); and the least explored area, the "pale dark tourism" which embraces histories of real horror, the supernatural, and places where the mythology and reality have become deeply entangled. In chapter one, I will further discuss these terms in regards to how useful and generally accepted they are.

Instead of pale dark tourism, I would suggest the terms curious history and historical curiosities. By definition, the word curious addresses both the eagerness of these visitors to know or see something new and refers to the strange and unusual nature of their destination. I argue that all who seek historical knowledge are curious,

but sometimes the history they seek is itself curious. These historical curiosities can take all forms. The historical obsession with filtering out what is fact from what is fiction is not an entirely useful endeavor. This is especially important to consider since it typically throws out any beliefs that are not documented—historically only preserving the viewpoint and accounts written by affluent white men. The fringe of historical understanding is filled with places where verifiable data, oral history, and fiction meet.

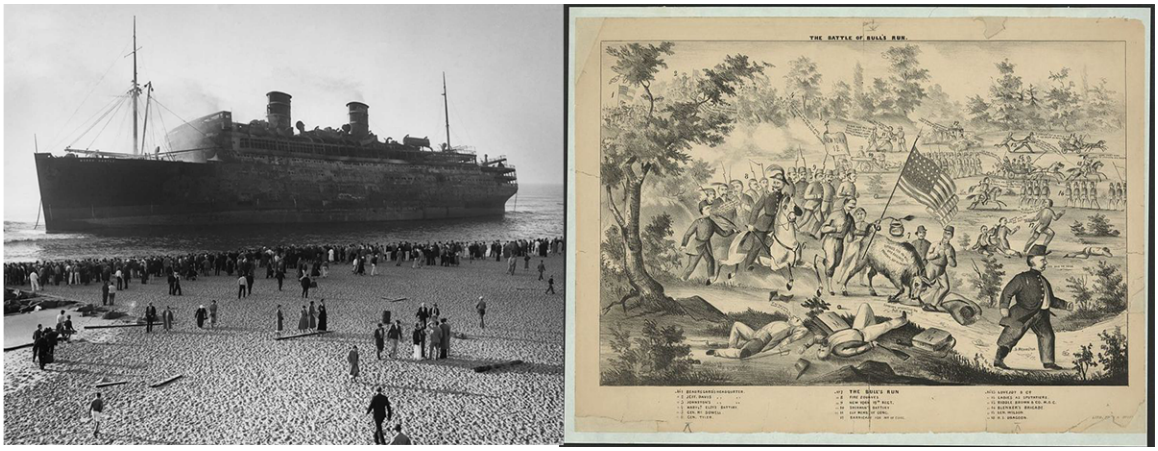

Figure 2. Left: SS Morro Castle burning while crowds watch 1937, Library of Congress.; Right: The Battle of Bull Run "14 LADIES AS SPECTATORS," Library of Congress.

Dark tourism is a rapidly growing portion of the heritage tourism industry but is not by any means new. In 1937, while the SS Morro Castle burned, killing 137, the crowd swelled as the news spread. Historians often documented spectators picnicking as they watched the fray during Civil War battles, including Gettysburg and Bull Run. From late colonial period through the early twentieth century in Tennessee history, public

hangings and lynchings were some of the largest gatherings of crowds—numbering into the tens of thousands.[10]

Before 1910, executions were a public spectacle drawing crowds in the tens of thousands out of "morbid and illimitable curiosity," often with a carnivalesque atmosphere including drunken revelry in the streets, food being served, vendors peddling wares, and children being excused from school to join in the festivities. In 1880, two African American men, John Hall and Burrell Smith, were executed by hanging in Murfreesboro, Tennessee (about 30 miles southwest of Nashville) in such an atmosphere. They had allegedly confessed to several robberies, arson, and murder. The event drew 12,000 mostly white attendees–three times the population of the city. Seats sold for $0.25.

While these are all examples of visiting active suffering in the past, historic battlefields continue to draw crowds each year to their hallowed ground. Tourism driven by suffering and death continues to thrive today. Likewise, the stories we tell as a

[10] "THE DEATH DROP." Daily American (1875-1894), February 21, 1880. "Gallows and a Barbecue." Memphis Daily Appeal. February 21, 1880.; Carrie Russell, "Reckoning with a Violent and Lawless Past: A Study of Race, Violence, and Reconciliation in Tennessee," Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2010.; "Knox Martin's Death Warrant." Daily American, March 16, 1879.; "THE DEATH PENALTY: Execution of Knox Martin, the Bell's Bend Murderer…" Daily American 91875-1894). March 29, 1879.; The last public hanging in the United States. The death of Rainey Bethea drew a crowd of 20,000 spectators. Owensboro, KY, 1936.

culture continue to influence dark tourism travel and, in turn, properties with dark connotations influence culture and media.

The majority of research concerning dark tourism sites comes from tourism and leisure studies, though cultural geographers and some from other disciplines have weighed in as well. As a relatively new discipline, the majority of work has focused on the motivations of tourists seeking out places associated with death or suffering; labeling, categorizing, and describing these types of locations; and posing a few questions about the ethical implications of the commodification of dark tourism sites. To understand these spaces where the primary draw is the auratic qualities they may offer; a discussion of space is a necessary exploration. Philosophers and cultural geographers' views on how we conceive of spaces, the cultural norms surrounding death and the byproduct of memorialization, and how society deals with sites of tragedy offer valuable insights.

While the tourism studies discipline has planted the flag in dark tourism, and with it, dark historical sites. However, these properties are as significant a cultural resource in need of preservation as any other portion of our heritage and, as such, requires interdisciplinary scholarship consideration and warrant the attention of historic preservation specialists. A property like the Winchester house is eligible for preservation because of its unique architecture. Additionally, it should be recognized as a significant structure of the spiritualism movement and occult movements of the late nineteenth century.

What Do Dark Tourism Scholars Have to Say?

The field of dark tourism scholarship offers more questions than answers. Some questions are as basic as, "Should these sites exist or in what capacity?" If we raised a monument to every tragedy, eventually, we would have nothing but monuments. As the Shanksville, Pennsylvania tragedy on 9/11 teaches us,[11] sometimes the process of sorting out who tragedy "belongs" to is a complex issue, especially if the event happens on privately owned property. What right does the government or public interest have to take land or resources forcefully? What right do those same landowners have to profit from a national tragedy? One of the most significant ethical questions is determining in what capacity is appropriate to interpret or commodify dark tourism properties. Which stakeholders should make that determination–local inhabitants, government officials, property owners, victims' survivors, or surviving victims? By who and how is the appropriate tone determined? Considerations typically include–how much time has passed since the incident, if there are any living witnesses, how widely known is the event, and what was the treatment of the mass media at the time, and perhaps most interestingly–how sympathetic did people feel then and do we feel now toward the victims and perpetrators?

[11] J. William Thompson, *From Memory to Memorial: Shanksville, America, and Flight 93* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).

Much of the writing concerning dark tourism is superficial in nature, often with a judgmental tone. A representative example is the article, "Dark Tourism: The Destinations We Don't Talk About," which appeared in *Travel Daily.*[12] In 2018, Christian Tolentino presented a harsher and less nuanced understanding of what dark tourism includes. This is extremely common and an issue in the field that needs to be addressed more often. Tolentino's evidence is a quote from a dark tourism company founder who explains that people who often engage in exploring these types of destinations come away with a much deeper understanding of the reality.

Not all academic treatments are judgmental, a few deal with the practical considerations. Community planning and public policy scholar Everett Drake Haynes discusses dark tourism from a strictly economic standpoint in his thesis, "Paranormal Tourism Study of Economics and Public Policy."[13] He answers the question of how paranormal niche tourism affects and relates to local economics and public policy. His survey interviewing paranormal tourists, along with businesses, tour companies, services, and hotels related to the paranormal is one of the few quantitative research studies in the field. Haynes also identified a link between paranormal tourism and popular media.

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[12] Christian Tolentino, "Dark Tourism: The Destinations We Don't Talk About," *Travel Daily*, September 4, 2018.

[13] Everett Drake Haynes, "Paranormal Tourism Study of Economics and Public Policy," M. A. thesis, Kansas State University, 2016.

The link between media consumption and the cultural impact on dark tourism is largely neglected, which is why I have chosen to place such a large emphasis on this relationship. In the seminal dark tourism book, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism,* eight scholars produced 13 essays that gave almost as many reasons for travel to dark tourism sites as there are writers. Tony Walter, for instance, focuses on dark tourism as a way of mediating our psychological relationship to death.[14] His analysis ranges from how media influences our relationship with the dead to the under which type of government a society is ruled. Walter's colleague Craig Wright disagreed, arguing that dark tourists are attempting to fulfill a need to become more worldly and educated.[15]

Tony Seaton provided an interesting stance in his essay, "Purposefulness Otherness: Approaches to the Management of Thanatourism."[16] He first suggested redefinition of "othering" in regard to the social sciences. The concept of othering is useful for viewing the way societies react to issues including death and impending death. A reductive analysis of his work centers on how people view their in-group and outsiders in the context of culture, society, or shared value groups. Seaton further

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[14] Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, ed, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Tonawanda, NY: Channel View Publications, 2009)., Chapter 3 Dark Tourism: Mediating Between the Dead and the Living.

[15] Ibid., Chapter 7, "Contested National Tragedies: An Ethical Dimension."

[16] Ibid., Chapter 5, "Purposefulness Otherness: Approaches to the Management of Thanatourism."

argued that death is the greatest "other" of all, and tourism associated with death therefore stems from the impossibility of experience but desire to satisfy curiosity.

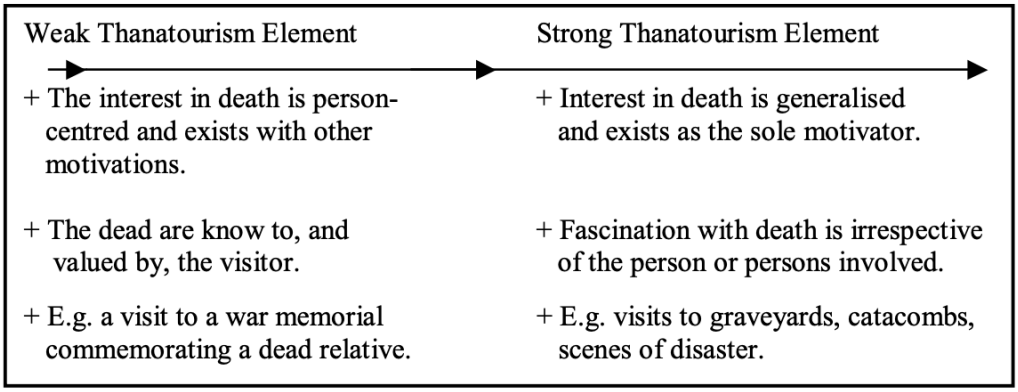

Figure 3. Seaton's Thanatourism Continuum. Stephanie Marie Yuill, "Dark Tourism: Understanding Visitor Motivation at Sites of Death and Disaster," M.S. thesis, Texas A&M University, 2003., 11.

Seaton's comments on what defines "spaces" included four key attributes: what exists in the imagination, what is socially constructed, the temporal concerns, and attribution. As he explored the auratic qualities that define these spaces, he, like Henri Lefebvre, arrives at the same conclusion of sacred spaces as those set apart. Seaton acknowledged the need for further language to define the different types of spaces that are neither sacred nor the "profane" spaces in which commerce and everyday life happen. According to Seaton's framework, dark tourism management is best handled depending on the measures of how the site comes into being and who the stakeholders

are, and the relationship dynamics between the different stakeholder groups, which he refers to as the "heritage force field."

Owners/controllers • Goals/interests of institution? • Goals/interests of financial backers? • Goals/interests of animators-researchers, creatives, etc? • Other groups/interests (e.g. governmental)?	**POWER and TIME**	***Host community*** • Their relationship to heritage narrative and subject groups, and to owners/controllers? • Their participation in, and benefit from, heritage development? • Their acceptance of visitor numbers?
POWER and TIME	**HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT**	**POWER and TIME**
Subject groups • Their benefit from narrative? • Degree of participation? (Whose story? Whose blame? Whose heroic narrative? Whose exclusions/silences?	**POWER and TIME**	***Visitor groups*** • Their relationship to subject narratives/ silenced narratives? • Their relationships to and with subjects, owners/ controllers. Host communities? • Their tastes – aesthetic, historical, etc?

Figure 4. Seaton's Heritage Force Field table. Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, ed, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Tonawanda, NY: Channel View Publications, 2009), 105.

Typology of thanatourism origins/ beginnings	***Issues and management tasks***
Natural and Man-made Origins – natural disasters and human catastrophes	• No human group responsible for *origins of sites as tourism attractions* (flood, fire, major atrocity sites) • Visitor interest/demand triggered by historical record or modern news/publicity (Pompeii, Ground Zero after 9/11) • Reactive tourism management later required to control spontaneous tourism demand • May be ethical questions if commercial exploitation is introduced
Man-made Origins – sites of functional change	• Sites or locations *originate* with non-tourism functions (e.g. as military installations, gaols, catacombs, etc.) • Sites become functionally obsolete/defunct • Sites relaunched/represented as thanatourism sites • Tourism management required to effect changeover of function, possibly in consultation/collaboration with site's previous functionaries • Commercialisation likely to be adopted to launch and maintain transformed site
Man-made Beginnings 1: Created thanatourism attractions	• Entrepreneurial or corporate action initiates the beginnings/development of a site as thanatourism attraction (e.g. Madame Tussauds, London Dungeon, Dracula Restaurant) • Target markets are typically mass tourists • Managers totally responsible for products, promotions, pricing, distribution • Commercialisation not a problem, since the sites have been developed as private sector enterprises
Man-made Beginnings 2: Thanatourism as temporary thematisation strategy for cultural attractions and destinations	• Site or attraction established as cultural/heritage attractions/destinations, often by public sector, local authorities or community groups • Initial/main audience likely to be elite/educated • Managerial desire to reach broader audiences or diversify appeals of institution or destination • Thanatourism adopted as temporary thematisation strategy • Products from heritage collections or destination attributes selected, sometimes in collaboration with other institutions and enterprises, to support thanatourism positioning for short periods (e.g. human skeleton exhibitions, guided cemetery tours and ghost walks in urban centres, Ned Kelly trails in and around Melbourne, etc.)

Figure 5. Seaton's Origins and Beginnings analysis and managerial action in thanatourism developments. Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, ed, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Tonawanda, NY: Channel View Publications, 2009), 105.

Stephanie Marie Yuill explored the subject of dark tourist motivation in her study of visitors to the Holocaust Museum at Houston. In her thesis, "Understanding Visitor Motivation at Sites of Death and Disaster," Yuill surveyed these dark tourists to find out their conscious motivators. Her conclusions showed the overwhelming reasons given were remembrance and education.[17] Her research echoes a common theme: visitors to these sites do not see themselves as dark tourists. Historical interpreters also struggle with this categorization.

The need to redefine "dark tourism" is apparent throughout even the work by dark tourism scholars who have coined the term. In a roundtable discussion between John J. Lennon, Tony Seaton, and Craig Wight, they collectively recognize that the labels of dark tourist and dark tourism site are flatly rejected by visitors and managers or curators alike. They do not view themselves as "aficionados of transgressive behavior suggested by the word 'dark'."[18]

An enormous amount of scholarship in the dark tourism field centers on labeling. Graham Dann suggested the following alliteratively named categories: Perilous Places (dangerous places, towns of horror); Houses of Horror (dungeons of death, heinous hotels); Fields of Fatality (battlegrounds, Holocaust sites, cemeteries); Tours of

[17] Stephanie Marie Yuill, "Dark Tourism: Understanding Visitor Motivation at Sites of Death and Disaster," M.S. thesis, Texas A&M University, 2003.

[18] J. John Lennon, Tony Seaton, and Craig Wright, "Directions, disconnect and critique: round table discussion," *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (2017): 229.

Torment (mayhem and murder, now notorious sites); and Themed Thatos (museums of death, monuments to mortality).[19] However, dark tourism properties can often fit into several or none of these categories. Where do the supernatural and cryptozoological fit into these categories? Duncan Light suggests the classification of "dark" is largely unhelpful with the connotation it contributes.[20] He advocates instead that much like works of art; it is more about what the viewer or visitor brings to the experience. I agree with this assertion based on how historical interpreters largely object to the dark tourism label.[21]

J. John Lennon and Malcolm Foley coined the term dark tourism in a 1996 paper exploring the fascination with JFK's assassination.[22] Seaton devised the label of "thanatourism," and Chris Rojek developed the concept of "black spots" to describe locations marred by tragedy in his 1993 book, *Ways of Seeing-Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel*. His concept of "black spots" is a thought-provoking term because these "places" rely solely on the memory of a terrible thing happening in a given space and how we have transformed it to memorialize tragedy. I would challenge that for example, Shanksville, Pennsylvania, is the home to a lesser-known and visited 9/11

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[19] Graham M. S. Dann, "The Dark Side of Tourism," Department of Tourism & Leisure (University of Luton, 1998).

[20] Duncan Light, "Progress in Dark Tourism and Thanatourism Research: An Uneasy Relationship with Heritage Tourism," *Tourism Management, Vol. 61* (August 2017): 275-301.

[21] McDoux Preservation, LLC. "New Orleans Tour Offerings Research," Internal research for McDoux preservation including a survey of New Orleans tour guides.

[22] Malcolm Foley and J. John Lennon, "JFK and Dark Tourism: A Fascination with Assassination." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* Vol. 2, No. 4 (1996): 198–211.

memorial that is managed by the National Park Service. On September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked United Airlines Flight 93 and the plane subsequently crashed when the passengers overpowered the terrorists, killing all aboard. In an instant, a farmer's field and forest were transformed into a "black spot."

This transformation has occurred countless times but only happens when the tragedy is observed. Take Lizzie Borden's childhood home,[23] which has now been transformed into a bed and breakfast. It qualifies as a black spot because of the brutal murders and the how media for 100 years has fixated on this celebrity murder site, but only because others were aware they happened. If equally brutal murders had taken place at another quaint Victorian home but gone undiscovered, it would not be a black spot. Much like the observer or Schrödinger's effects in physics, knowing and observing "changes" reality.

Debra Kamin's article, "The Rise of Dark Tourism," which appeared in *The Atlantic* in 2014, provides a general survey of early dark history tour inclinations that included battles like Waterloo and Gettysburg but continue through today in the Gaza strip.[24] Kamin does a serviceable job explaining some of the facets of dark tourism but stops shorts of looking for deeper meaning or understanding. She approaches the

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[23] In 1892, Abby and Andrew Borden were murdered with an axe. Borden's daughter Lizzie was suspected of the crime. The ensuing investigation and trial were consumed at the national level as a subject of extreme public interest.

[24] Debra Kamin, "The Rise of Dark Tourism: When war zones become travel destinations," *The Atlantic*, July 15, 2014.

subject without judgment, which is refreshing. She ends the article with a quote from Philip Stone. “There’s no such thing as a dark tourist, only people interested in the world around them,” he says. “You and I are probably dark tourists when we visit Ground Zero. We’re not dark tourists—we’re just interested in what happens in our lives.”[25]

Dark Tourism and Ethics

In his 2009 essay “Dark Tourism: Morality and New Moral Spaces,” Philip R. Stone examined dark tourism through the lens of moral panic and social contracts. He condescendingly suggested that increasing secularization and the “negation of religion as the traditional dominant framework” left people “isolated, disoriented and morally confused.”[26] He argued that dark tourism locations where individuals consume death are places in which society is renegotiating moral boundaries and ethical principles.

In her 2019 blog post, “Darkness on the Edge of Town,” historian Kat McDonald argued against the broader meaning of dark tourism.[27] She describes the growing trend of dark tourism in her town of Kingston, Ontario, Canada. McDonald raised the question of ethics regarding giving “haunted tours” of an asylum or penitentiary that was in use until twenty-odd years ago. She presents a valid concern. It is one thing for tours of the Tower of London to describe the torture that was visited on prisoners there, but an

[25] Ibid.

[26] Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, eds., *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Tonawanda, NY: Channel View Publications, 2009).

[27] McDonald, “Darkness on the Edge of Town.”

entirely other thing to do so when the correctional officers and prisoners are still alive and living elsewhere. Perhaps for tourism, that is an issue, but when I was researching the Tennessee State Prison, I know I felt it was important to outline the horrors of the past and into the present or recent past. It would be disrespectful to deny inmates' suffering in the 1990s but delineate the suffering of the past. Either way, she raises some thought-provoking points about ethics, privacy, and sensationalizing suffering.

What is deemed acceptable in terms of marketing, promotion, commodification, and interpretation widely varies from author to author. Just like any historical site, there is a danger of focusing too narrowly on an aspect of the surrounding history and identity formation. In order to responsibly interpret these dark sites, they need to be interpreted holistically. If done correctly, dark tourism should embrace the full spectrum of what draws people to a historical site. As historians, we shouldn't recoil from the difficult parts of the past. For example, the plantation houses that shy away from the horrors of slavery are leaving out an important part of their history. Likewise, any site that focused only on the horrors without presenting the humanity and agency of individuals and the broader context surrounding these issues is doing an equal disservice to the public.

Historical interpretation as it is currently practiced is most often presented in fractured divisions. "Dark history" presupposes the rest as "light history," but as any researcher knows, if you go back far enough in any research project, you will encounter pain, loss, tragedy, or horror in turn. It is part of the human experience. We should not censor the unsettling portions of the interpretations we present as historians. I propose

a more holistic approach to preserving cultural identity, which can only come from the marriage of the whitewashed sanitized versions and the darker sides of history, layered with folklore and fiction for good measure.

Chapter Two

Collaborative Creation of Cultural Identity and Conceptions of History

> "Hence the vast body of mythologies, folklore, and legends, which science, history, fiction, are all blended together, judgment and imagination inextricably confused." – Frederick Jackson Turner, 1891

What if we have got it all backward? Are historians writing history for the public? Or does the public shape history through a variety of media, generationally passed stories, casual exchanges, and the allocation of funds? In her article, "African American Women's Historical Consciousness," Julie Des Jardins relates the unique idea expressed by Ophelia Egypt, a graduate student who interviewed former slaves in 1929. Egypt says that personal, bias, and subjective histories have a special kind of validity that empirical findings cannot begin to hope to achieve. Egypt describes how the perceived reality was important, saying, "the merit of these documents lies not so much in the accurate recording of the historical events, as in the realistic fabrication of the experiential world of the persons themselves."[28] These histories are internalized, accepted, "known" to be

[28] Julie Des Jardins, "African American Women's Historical Consciousness," *Women & the Historical Enterprise in America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 140-141.

true. No amount of factual evidence will ever sway the public the way that the public can now make their perspectives and opinions known. Egypt would likely have agreed with her contemporary Carl Becker that each person constructs their own history, and memory is at the core of how we shape our lives.[29] This does not take place on this personal level exclusively.

Many groups, such as the black bibliophiles, worked in a deliberate manner to actively shape their history. In "Bibliophiles, Activists, and Race Men," Tony Martin explains, "The reasons for collecting were not always academic, they were also highly political. These books were being collected with a view to uplifting a downtrodden race of people . . ." [30] The African American community was not the only ones trying to change the way they were viewed as a people by shaping the collections from which their history would be written. The American Jewish Historical Society also came together with the sole purpose of preserving their history the way they, as Jewish people, thought it should be written and to change the perception of their people within society as a whole. Elizabeth Kaplan uses this group as a prime example to illustrate the concept that archivists have a serious responsibility due to their de facto role in shaping

[29] Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37 (1932): 221-236.

[30] Tony Martin, "Bibliophiles, Activists, and Race Men" in Sinnette, Coates, and Battle, eds., *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History* (1990), 32.; Tara White, Introduction and Chapter 3 of "'A Shrine of Liberty for the Unborn Generations': African American Clubwomen and the Preservation of African American Historic Sites." (PhD. Dissertation, MTSU, 2010). White also draws the connection of groups like the NCNW to their political motivations of betterment.

identity.[31] We may be inclined to look at these incidents of bias shaping of history by marginalized groups and think that it is fitting since they were treated so unfairly in history as a whole. Where do we then draw the line? Dunbar Rowland sought to form the Mississippi State Archives with a personal agenda as well. "Lost Cause" advocates on the board that hired him shaped his work. Collecting and writing history in the Jim Crow South, his choices reflect the desire to reinforce white supremacy and the idea of the "glorious Confederacy."[32] It is important to note here that among these groups who were dictating what should be collected —they were mostly non-historians.[33]

Michel-Rolph Trouillot addresses the impact of public contribution in his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. [34] The concept of "history," via historical interpretation, is often thought of by academic historians as something they package up and deliver to the public. However, through novels, films, memes, popular history books, and a million other ways, historical understanding for the masses is being written by the public. Trouillot asks readers to consider that history is produced largely outside of academia and perhaps the line between fiction and history is useless.

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[31] Elizabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity," *American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 126.

[32] Patricia Galloway, "Archives, Power, and History: Dunbar Rowland and the Beginning of the State Archives of Mississippi (1902-1936)," *American Archivist* 69 (2006): 79-91.

[33] With apologies to the memory of Carl Becker, I am using the term non-historian to identify individuals that are not professionally trained historians.

[34] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Anthropologist, ethnographer, author, and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston explored similar themes. Focusing primarily on collective memory passed down in African American communities, in order to understand the experience of a given community, she used oral traditions and folklore. It is less important that something is "true" or verifiable than it does that the experiences as remembered (by formerly enslaved people in this instance) created the foundation for their remembered experiences and, in turn, create a family legacy and identity.

The National Park Service and other public preservation programs rely on federal funding. This financial dependence renders them subject to the budgeting whims of politicians. Public historians differ on opinions concerning the relationship to the public as a driver. Edward T. Linenthal discusses civic engagement as a way of connecting with the public, and likewise, Freeman Tilden discusses the work of appealing to the public, but Charles B. Hosmer and Amy Whisnant et al. talk about the National Park Service's boom and bust existence. When budgets are slashed in Congress, the NPS is often an early cut.[35] The government giveth and the government taketh away, so to speak.

[35] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957).; Charles B. Hosmer, "Verne Chatelain and the Development of the Branch of History of the National Park Service," *The Public Historian,* 16 (1994): 30-32.*;* Edward T. Linenthal, "The National Park Service and Civic Engagement." *The Public Historian,* 28 no.1 (2006): 123-129.; Anne Whisnant, Marla Miller, David Thelen, and Gary Nash, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service. Organization of American Historians and the National Park Service,*(2011).

If the public is the one holding sway over what buildings are preserved, what exhibits are displayed in museums, which parks receive funding, where do they get their information? It would appear film, cultural exchanges, and social media have a substantive impact on the public's thoughts and opinion of history, even if the information they are taking in is inaccurate or unsubstantiated.

The documentary series *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* describes using a lie to tell the truth. They give the example of the film *Saving Private Ryan* depicting the storming of the beaches of Normandy while being filmed in Ireland.[36] This difference in locale seems like a small thing, but for a generation that saw the film, and not the war, their collective memory of this event will likely reflect the cinematic representation. Ian Tyrrell delineates the impact of film on history via social learning and how history is represented.[37] In Tyrrell's *Historians in Public,* Edgar Dale's research on morality offers the idea that the increase in drinking and smoking in early film changed the basic concept of what was considered socially acceptable, making room for other lascivious activities.[38] The idea that these norms seep into the collective unconscious begs the

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[36] *The Story of Film: An Odyssey,* directed by Mark Cousins (Hopscotch Films, 2011); *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Stephen Spielberg (Amblin Entertainment, 1998).

[37] Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 56-58. *Chronicles of America* pioneered writing history to be palatable for the public. "All volumes were to spare the 'traditional sensibility of the general reader' by 'the almost complete absence of footnotes.'" Written to entertain, the Chronicles not only preceded history films, but Tyrrell attributes them to making the Pageant of America possible, 57.

[38] Ibid., 75-78.; Malcolm Gladwell, "Thresholds of Violence," *The New Yorker,* October 19, 2015. This article focuses on school shootings, but frames them in the context of a building riot. The threshold for participating in violence is lowered with each additional participant- an interesting update to the

question of how media relates to the public perception of history and shapes cultural identity. Jeffrey Stewart and Fath Ruffins called the television miniseries *Roots* "the single most important public history event of the 1970s."[39] For my purposes, it doesn't matter if the series was made in response to the climate created by the civil rights movement or if Roots was responsible for a resurgence of interest in African American history or genealogy in general. As a result, the historical landscape changed in the minds of Americans following the debut of the miniseries.

While *Roots* brought about increased awareness, there is a serious flaw in cinematic historical depictions. Often, the story needs heroes and villains- in order to not confuse the audience with circumstance or complexities, one group is usually made into a caricature while historical heroes are stripped of vice and fault. Tyrrell cites the films *The Birth of a Nation, Dixie,* and *Gone With the Wind* as pandering "to regional and national historical consciousness and to popular conceptions of American history without providing any serious intellectual challenges to dominant themes… African

concept from the 1920s. Historical films are more in vogue than ever and most of them depict the most violent periods in our history. The fixation on war could make us more war like. This raises the question of what the constant media coverage of violence is doing to the modern psyche.

[39] Jeffrey C. Stewart and Fath Davis Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective, 1828-1984," *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public,* edited by Susan Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenweig, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 333. *Roots* addressed the issue of American slavery through the story of an enslaved family.

Americans deplored these films for their unrealistic portrayals of southern society, just as academic historians did for the historical pictures as a whole."[40]

The Dangers of the Stories We Tell

Film is not the only fiction that that affects the public consciousness. American literature similarly reflected and perpetuated common cultural beliefs. In 1907, before film was widely available, O. Henry wrote *The Ransom of Red Chief*, *a* short story in which a little boy "playing Indians" attempts to scalp someone.[41] Two small-time criminals kidnap a wealthy man's son in Alabama. The child pretends to be an "Indian chief" and repeatedly injures his capture until they agree to pay his father to take him back.

The cultural attitudes showcased in Henry's short story offers an insight into the public perception of Native Americans in a time predating spaghetti-western films and echoes the idea of the collective consciousness. White historians shaped the narrative in the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps Hubert Howe Bancroft's one-sided accounts fed into the legend of "savages" taking scalps. "Plainly we may make choice from among many ideals. If, now, we strive to reduce them to some kind of order, we find that in

[40] Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 82-83.

[41] O. Henry, "The Ransom of Red Chief," *Whirligigs,* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1910).

each age a different ideal of history has prevailed. To the savage history is the painted scalp, with its symbolic representations of the victims of his valor; or it is the legend of the gods and heroes of his race,"[42] Frederick Jackson Turner goes on to discuss the mingling of "mythologies, folklore, and legends, which science, history, fiction, are all blended together, judgment and imagination inextricably confused."[43] James Harvey Robinson didn't hold a much higher opinion of historians writing history concerning long-dead events, "The portentously serious alternates with the lightest gossip. A dissipated courtier maybe allotted a chapter and the destruction of a race be left unrecorded."[44]

Sean Daley is a professor of practice and director of the Institute for Indigenous Studies at Lehigh University's College of Health and Associate Director for American Indian Health Research and Education Alliance. He is an applied sociocultural anthropologist and ethnographer with expertise in American Indian Studies whose area of concentration is indigenous health. In an interview with *Astonishing Legends* Daley

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[42] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of Western History," *Wisconsin Journal of Education* 21 (1891): 15.

[43] Ibid.

[44] James Harvey Robinson, "The New History," *The New History: Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook*, (New York: McMillian co., 1912): 2.; Clare Haeussler Bohan, "Introduction: Lucy Maynard Salmon, 1853-1927," in *Go to the Sources: Lucy Maynard Salmon and the Teaching of History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 1-8.; Lucy Salmon, "History in a Back Yard" (1912), in Nicholas Adams and Bonnie G. Smith, eds., *History and the Texture of Modern Life: Selected Essays of Lucy Maynard Salmon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 76-84. I connected Salmon's methods and point most closely here. The principle of writing the histories of everyone, everywhere fits in line with Robinson's democratic view of history.

stated, “I don’t pay too much attention to the writings of historians now or in the past and archaeologists. It has been my experience that they don’t care what living native peoples—the descendants of those they claim to study—have to say or think. They are more concerned with the previous writings of white academics and towing the lines of their disciplines. The fact that people still believe in and push the Bering Strait theory is a prime example of that.”[45]

Folklore is too often discounted by historians as an unreliable source of information. Folklore is sacred in its own right— as the words of the dead before us passed down. These oral traditions often sound fantastic, but like any good story, they must be based on something real. The result of ignoring oral traditions is the erasure of groups that largely relied on this method over written methods, such as enslaved Africans and the indigenous peoples of North America.

Daley outlined the problem of exoticization, victim-blaming, and cultural appropriation of indigenous culture in America. A common theme in ghost stories and horror films is the “disturbed Indian burial site” trope. He suggests this is rooted in the racist history of native and colonial relations, “Most of this is the byproduct of the old Christian belief that natives were pagans and devil worshippers and as such when they

[45] *Astonishing Legends*, “Episode 123: The Sallie House – Ghost in the Machine Part 4,” Podcast by Scott Philbrook & Forrest Burgess, (October 2018).

die, they will stick around and haunt the good and proper white Christians."[46] The underlying assumption is that Native Americans are at default spiritual peoples when they range as broadly as any other population in their belief systems. This assumption leads to denial of the cultural diversity of native peoples and the exoticization of native religions. Because native traditions are assumed to be the problem, they are assumed to be the solution, but most often, with the limited availability of willing Native Americans to engage with these practices, white new-age practitioners step in. Daley observes: "Now we are at cultural appropriation. This Indian land thing works great for non-natives but can be very offensive and insulting to native people themselves."[47]

The stories we tell shape the identity of "place." Both from the creation of self-identification but also how outsiders view a community identity. The rural Southeastern United States will perhaps never escape the ominous banjo notes from the film *Deliverance.* These historical-folklore-fiction identity conglomerations run the spectrum from the whimsical to the tragic. The lighthearted spectacle of cryptids, the romanticized vampires of New Orleans, and the murder of dozens of women in New England all fall on a spectrum of cultural identities that have been irrevocably altered by folklore and fiction surrounding them.

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

Chapter Three

Hierarchy of Death and Memorialization

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

-George Orwell, *Animal Farm*[48]

Dark tourism scholarship as it pertains to the United States is primarily concerned with memorials. Cemeteries, along with battlefields, are a few of the types of historical properties that fall into the category of dark tourism which are properly studied and given the preservation attention on par with other mainstream historic sites in the United States. It is notable that these categories are not typically researched and preserved in the context of dark tourism and further, few studies discuss how cultural attitudes influence memorialization efforts. Chapter four is an exploration of the memorialization landscape in America which illustrates that the attention to battlefields, war memorials, and military cemeteries is likely owing to cultural attitudes surrounding death, patriotism, and the hierarchy in which we appraise the mournability of different types of death.

[48] George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, &Co., 1946).

A Hierarchy of Death

Many poets and philosophers have called death "the great equalizer," however, the esteem with which we imbue the dead is dependent on a number of variables. In his capacity as a journalist at *The Guardian*, Roy Greenslade delivered a lecture in which he coined the term "hierarchy of death."[49] The lack of coverage of deaths related to the Troubles—a period of ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland that spanned from the 1960s to the 1990s prompted the lecture. As a journalist, Greenslade's definition focused on the disproportionate amount and type of media coverage a death or several deaths received relative to others. He put forth the idea that domestic deaths rank above foreign, deaths in developed nations above those in developing countries, if the decedent was white over darker-skinned, and finally that deaths associated with ongoing conflict barely received any coverage at all.

National Public Radio journalist David Folkenflik made a similar comparison between the 2015 attacks in Paris and suicide bombers killing 40 people – both of which happened in the span of a day.[50] Three suicide bombers attacked Paris, France, November 13–14, 2015, killing 137. The day before, on November 12, 2015, two suicide bombers in Beirut, Lebanon killed 43 and injured over 200. The global coverage between

[49] Roy Greenslade, "A hierarchy of death," *The Guardian*, April 19, 2007; Roy Greenslade, "The Damien Walsh Memorial Lecture by Roy Greenslade," August 4, 1998.

[50] David Folkenflik, "Is There A Hierarchy Of The Importance Of Death In The News Business?" *National Public Radio,* November 17, 2015.

the two events was wildly disproportionate to the amount of carnage. As part of the conversation with Folkenflik, Bill Keller, the editor in chief of The Marshall Project, which covers the criminal justice system, said, "All deaths are equal to the victims and their families. But all deaths are not equal in the calculation of news value."[51]

I suggest the term *mournability* to describe the sum of cultural norms and attitudes around what degree of mourning or importance a death or deaths might have relative to others. The mournability of deaths is also influenced by compassion fade, type of death, and cultural perspectives. Greenslade's hierarchy of death is an excellent starting point, but it warrants expansion beyond relativity to news coverage. Memorialization and feeling are also deeply impacted by the type of death that occurs, as are the attention and longevity of the story. What else determines whether the site of a tragedy will become a shrine or spectacle? Why do we choose to memorialize some deaths over others?

The type of memorialization often reflects the mournability of a death or mass deaths. We can take the hierarchy a few steps further if we look at how instances of mass death are memorialized—or not as the case may be. Did the deaths occur all at once or over an extended period? Were the deaths collective or individual? Did the death serve a purpose? Greenslade included "ongoing conflict" as one of his

[51] Ibid.

determiners. For historic preservation purposes, this can be reframed as deaths occurring over an extended period.

Psychologists have proposed our capacity to feel empathy diminishes the larger a problem becomes and the longer it continues. *Compassion fade*, with subcategories of *collapse of compassion* and *disaster fatigue*, and the phenomenon of *psychic numbing* have been outlined by psychologists to explain how humans process death and tragedy. Building off of the saying, "One death is a tragedy; a million deaths a statistic," psychologist Paul Slovic demonstrated that even going from a single death to two, there is an enormous drop-off in the amount of compassion or aid expressed.[52] After studying the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the bombs were dropped, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton suggested a response he called "psychic numbing," which is, in the most basic terms, a collective version of what is the response of dissociation and depersonalization in individuals experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.[53]

Similarly, apart from experiencing ongoing collective trauma like living through a pandemic or war, 24-hour news media is likely heavily contributing to the fatigue we feel surrounding disasters. On average, over the last five years in America alone, there has been at least one daily mass shooting.[54] Only the particularly egregious events and

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[52] Scott Slovic and Paul Slovic, "Arithmetic of compassion," International *New York Times,* Dec. 7, 2015.

[53] Robert Jay Lifton, "Beyond psychic numbing: a call to awareness," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 52 (October 1982).

[54] Gun Violence Archive statistical data.

often ones that target a vulnerable demographic like the children at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut or the Pulse Nightclub in Miami, Florida that targeted individuals based on sexual orientation typically breakthrough to penetrate the collective societal psyche. The connectivity of the internet allows for a greater exchange of information than ever. Still, this access also comes with the downside of being aware of the tragedies taking place globally. From massive fires, to drought, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, and tornadoes—humans have only in the past half-century been able to view disasters unfolding in real-time. In order to process all of this death and disaster, society creates spaces which are set apart to mediate our understanding and relationship with death.

The twentieth-century French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre introduced an entirely new evaluative framework for the study of human interaction with space to give it meaning and, in turn, experience different types of space. Lefebvre was a mid-twentieth century neo-Marxist and existentialist, so much of his work reflects his views pertaining to revolution, social class, and capitalism. His writings can be described as meta-philosophy and are often cerebral and meandering. In the seminal text, *The Production of Space*,[55] Lefebvre asserted that physical space reflects the humans who inhabit it. His work sits at the intersection of philosophy and what we now

[55] Henri Lefebvre*, La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropes, 1974) translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

refer to as human geography. Among the new terms he introduced were his "spatial triad" consisting of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space along with the concepts of absolute space, historical space, and abstract space.

Lefebvre dedicates the entirety of *The Production of Space* to fleshing out these concepts. Essentially, he suggests that any given space has several layers of meaning based on how humans have interacted with, shaped, utilized, ascribed meaning and associations to, move through, treat, or think about the space.

> Specialized works keep their audience abreast of all sorts of equally specialized spaces: leisure, work, play, transportation, public facilities – are all spoken of in special terms. Even illness and madness are supposed by some specialists to have their own peculiar space. We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on.[56]

This framework establishes terminology which is helpful when trying to describe the "feeling" of certain places. *Spatial practices* deal with our perception, the daily routines, and the use of a given space. The idea of *representations of space* concerns the conception of space, including the architects, planners, engineers' intentions, along with how we compress space and represent them through maps. *Representational space* is defined by how lived experiences inform a space, particularly the symbol and images

[56] Ibid., 8.

associated. *Absolute space* consists of the natural world, how it is transformed through religio-political movements and the symbolic mediation. Lefebvre classifies death as absolute space, immutable and unreachable by the living. As he observed: "'Something' always survives or endures – 'something' is not always a *thing*."[57] *Historical space* is the accumulation of knowledge, art, and technology that shapes the identity of a place – here I would add that folklore and fiction fit to flesh out identity in regard to this facet. Finally, *abstract space* is made up of schedules, social conventions, the auratic qualities or feeling of a space.

What would Lefebvre make of our ability to "visit" places using technology to "travel"? As it relates to dark tourism, this could include anything using google earth to "walk" through Arlington National Cemetery to engaging with historic properties and their stories through film, television, podcasts, etc. My experience at the Body Worlds exhibit, which utilized augmented reality (AR, which is like VR or virtual reality but incorporates the real setting with a camera), echoes this integration of technology with these experiences. Can we experience these locations without engaging with their auratic qualities?

[57] Ibid., 403.

Figure 6. Arlington Memorial Amphitheater. Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. Google Earth Streetview screen capture.

Some exhibits like “Body Worlds,” which involves the display of dissected corpses suspended in a process called plastination, have drawn criticism over practices associated with early exhibits (which have been addressed in the current iterations) and are considered “morbid.” The presentation of the dissected and preserved bodies is in the vein of scientific education. When I spoke to the employees of the Body Worlds exhibit at the Museum of Tech in San Jose, California, they said a negative reaction was rare; most people (including school children on field trips) found it interesting and were not particularly solemn. There is a strong argument to be made for participant observation and interviews as a tool of study in this field. Tone and auratic qualities are difficult to discuss without having experienced them. Jeffrey Podeshan refers to these

sites as geographically accessible emotional and psychic experiences.[58] Next, let us consider memorialization practices in the United States and how our cultural attitudes shape the landscape of honoring the dead.

Memorialization

Lefebvre said monuments are a way for humans to transcend death, but "visitors are bound to become aware of their own footsteps, and listen to the noises, the singing; they must breathe the incense-laden air, and plunge into a particular world…."[59] He says the most imposing and enduring monuments (like the Empress's Tomb in the Taj Mahal) are an attempt to "transmute the fear the passage of time and anxiety which surrounds death, into splendor."[60] Spatial practices can be empirically observed- you can measure the volume levels of hushed tones and slower movements in a sacred or solemn space.

Monuments are also often used to reinforce the religio-political establishment.[61] Lefebvre called Christianity a "great worshipper of tombs," venerating primarily "objects sanctified with death" as their holy relics.[62] In America, our memorials are typically limited to war, disaster, or individual deaths—most of which serve some nationalistic purpose.

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[58] Jeffrey S. Podoshen, Vivek Venkatesh, Jason Wallin, Susan A. Andrzejewski, and Zheng Jin. "Dystopian dark tourism: An exploratory examination," *Tourism Management*, 51 (May 2015): 323–325.

[59] Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace,* 221.

[60] Ibid., 221.

[61] Ibid., 221-224.

[62] Ibid. 254

Grief not centered on a specific place or a moment in time is more challenging to memorialize. This disconnect from mass death that occurs over time and regularly may be the reason we rarely see permanent memorials to mass death which occurred as a result of illness. When you have 9/11 types of events there is a moment of mass death, but when a population slowly dies of influenza or Covid-19, the tragedy is spread out over time, and people simply do not have the capacity to feel deep empathy for the dying and afflicted every day while continuing to function.

This list should be broadened to accommodate other aspects which appear to impact if and the extent to which American society will memorialize individual or mass deaths. Anyone who has read Romeo and Juliet or seen Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Thelma and Louise, or read about Bonnie and Clyde[63] is familiar with the concept of romanticized death. As Kenneth Foote delineated in *Shadowed Ground,* deaths that serve a "purpose" such as martyrdom, heroism, or patriotism are typically elevated above deaths that do not. Contrariwise, deaths that are considered taboo like euthanasia or suicide are rarely memorialized—even though suicide is recognized as a rapidly growing epidemic.[64]

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[63] The car Bonnie and Clyde were shot to death in is currently on display alongside a car which belonged to Al Capone in Whiskey Pete's Casino in Primm, Nevada.

[64] Deborah M. Stone, Thomas R. Simon, Katherine A. Fowler, et al. "Vital Signs: Trends in State Suicide Rates — United States, 1999–2016 and Circumstances Contributing to Suicide — 27 States, 2015," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 8, 2018; 67 (22): 617–624*.

Professor of religious studies Edward T. Linenthal explored the origins and development of the U.S. Holocaust Museum in his book *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*.[65] The creation of the museum was a particularly difficult effort of memorialization. The issues of determining a location, whose stories to tell, navigating between interest groups, designing exhibits, the appropriateness of artifacts, and the hurdles which impeded the museum's progress along the way are all potent reminders of how difficult the memorialization of horrible crimes can and should be.

His greatest contributions are the questions he poses about collective memory. Who owns memory? Who has the right to decide what should or should not be memorialized? He points out in the preface, which he added six years after the original publication, the rising compression of time between tragedy and memorialization and the move toward elevating the individuals involved over the awe of mass casualty. Only pages later, however, he expresses awareness of the uncomfortable feelings of "fascination that are aroused at expertly fashioned mass media spectacles of mass violence stir voyeuristic and pornographic impulses."[66] While not the focus of Linenthal's book, it warrants mentioning the Holocaust Museum is an example of a dark history museum that handled ethical considerations in a laudable manner. The museum

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[65] Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).*

[66] Ibid.*, xiv.*

navigated issues of age appropriateness by differentiating material viewable at various heights, sets an appropriate tone through sensory experience and architecture, and features a reconciliation room to help individuals cope with the emotional content of the museum. The Holocaust Museum is a prime example of memorialization done well, but unfortunately, few other dark tourism properties meet its standards.

Take for another example, the treatment of the "Trail of Tears" for most of its commemorative history. Andrew Denson's *Monuments to Absence: Cherokee Removal and the Contest Over Southern Memory,*[67] investigates the narrative around the public memory of indigenous peoples in the American Southeast. He connected the white-generated monuments to the Cherokee removal and Trail of Tears to the erasure of their enduring existence in the South. He also argued that the erection of monuments and memorialization of this removal was a way of affirming white possession of the South and the history as a direct reaction to the racial tensions of the Civil Rights Era.

In his book, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Geographer Kenneth Foote also provides a useful perspective on space and dark history. He outlined three fates for sites of mass tragedy– sanctification, designation,

[67] Andrew Denson, *Monuments to Absence: Cherokee Removal and the Contest Over Southern Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

rectification, and obliteration.[68] Foote's categories represent a spectrum of reaction to sites of violence and tragedy.

Sanctification stems from events which involve heroism or some positive lesson the public wishes to remember. These locations are sanctified, consecrated, and monuments are raised. Most often sanctified sites are battlefields or involve the death place of national heroes like John F. Kennedy.

Designation is the marking of a place as a location where something culturally significant took place. Like sanctification, designation memorializes a site, but is typically done by the minority and carried out at the local level. This type of recognition is usually a grass roots effort. Sites can move from designation to sanctification. Foote considers the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee as an example.

Rectification is simply removing the marks of violence and returning a site to its use without the acknowledgement the other categories grant. This process is typically associated with sites of accidental tragedy or senseless violence, such as the Chicago Fire of 1871 or the Wall Street bombing of 1920.

Obliteration occurs most often following an event which people would prefer to forget. With shameful events like mass murder or those with strong enough negative

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[68] Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).

associations, people often prefer destroying the event in the public memory rather than commemorating the passing of the victims. Properties like the homes of serial murderers John Wayne Gacy and Ted Bundy are torn down to discourage unwanted stigmatization of a community and keep away unwanted visitors.

I would add to this erasure as an extension of obliteration for sites which no demolition was necessary, only negligence to remember. Foote brings up Salem, Massachusetts, as a motivator for this body of scholarship. No marker or memorial to those executed and left to die in prison during the city's witchcraft scare in the late 1700s was erected until 1992. While the city now profits from dark tourism with its biggest events in September and October, their ancestors kept no official records of the execution sites and the only surviving information is anecdotally passed down by generations. Foote suggested this lack of record keeping, disclosure, and memorialization stemmed from shame over the actions of the past. We see similar trends today to conceptionally obliterate the past in the constant battles fought over k-12 curriculum to prevent teaching about race in history critically or include any substantial information about the American mass genocide of indigenous peoples.

Temporary Memorials for Mass Death from Illness

American studies professor and author Erika Doss documents the rising tide of memorials in her book, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America.* Doss explains temporary memorials serve to make recent, sudden deaths more visible to the public.

She suggests the duty of memory is to acknowledge loss. In discussing 9/11 memorials, Thompson cites Doss's work on the material culture of grief at sites like Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. She says, these objects express "the faith that Americans place in *things* to negotiate complex moments and events, such as traumatic death."[69] However, sudden traumatic death is not the only type of death that spurs temporary memorials. Mass death through illness is a similar tragedy typically only memorialized in temporary ways.

She suggests the different types of memorials are each driven by a motivating emotion. *Memorial Mania's* chapter titles nicely summarize the list—"Grief: Temporary Memorials and Contemporary Modes of Mourning," "Fear: Terrorism Memorials and Security Narratives," "Gratitude: Memorializing World War II and the 'Greatest Generation,'" "Shame: Duluth's Lynching Memorial and Issues of National Morality," and "Anger: Contesting American Identity in Contemporary Memorial Culture."[70]

[69] Thompson, *From Memory to Memorial: Shanksville, America, and Flight 93*.
[70] Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

An interesting contrast of instances of mass death in America can be drawn between war or terrorism memorials and memorialization of mass death from illness. Deaths occurring from illness are typically only given temporary memorials. Deaths that serve the purpose of patriotism are typically well and permanently memorialized.

While researching this topic, the world was upturned by Covid-19. At the height of deaths in both 2020 and 2021, more people have died daily than died in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and the total American deaths in 2020 alone exceeded the death toll of every twentieth-century war—combined. Cities sponsored temporary memorials and the federal government made tribute in the form of a field of flags at the January 2021 presidential inauguration.

Figure 7. Facebook post by multimedia journalist Forrest Sanders, January 8, 2021.

A century ago, the 1918-1921 Influenza pandemic in which death estimates range from 50–100 million worldwide also rocked the United States.[71] Over the course of those three years, 675,000 Americans died from the flu—again more than the U.S.

[71] M. E. Nickol and J. Kindrachuk, "A year of terror and a century of reflection: perspectives on the great influenza pandemic of 1918–1919," *BMC Infect Dis* 19 (2019): 117. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12879-019-3750-8

casualties of both world wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined.[72] In recent years, preserved samples have been studied and found this strain of flu was particularly deadly because of the high comorbidity of bacterial pneumonia.

The 1918-1921 pandemic is only nationally recognized in New Zealand, which lost nearly 1% of the existing population. America has few influenza memorials, as will probably be the case with Covid-19. At the end of World War I, the University of Montana planted 32 Ponderosa Pines (the state tree of Montana), each with a memorial tablet, to honor those connected to UM who lost their lives in service during the war. They make the notable distinction of including those who died from the flu while in training with those who died in combat.[73]

Figure 8. University of Montana WWI memorial.

The only other memorial to the influenza pandemic I was able to locate is a small privately funded fixture erected in 2018. At Hope Cemetery in Barre, Vt., a five-ton

[72] Alfred W. Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[73] *University of Montana.* "Memorial Row." https://www.umt.edu/memorialrow/default.php

granite bench sits on a triangle of grass. It is a mere five feet high and three feet deep, which seems modest in scale relative to the calamity it commemorates. “1918 Spanish Flu Memorial” reads an inscription on the front. “Over 50 million deaths worldwide” is chiseled on the back.[74]

The 1918 flu memorial bench, center, in Hope Cemetery, in Barre, Vt.
Caleb Kenna for The New York Times

Figure 9. 1918 flu memorial, Hope Cemetery, Barre, Vermont, photo by Caleb Kenna, *New York Times*.

[74] David Segal, “Why Are There Almost No Memorials to the Flu of 1918?” *NY Times.* May 14, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/14/business/1918-flu-memorials.html

The ongoing AIDS crisis in America has killed over 700,000 since data has been collected starting in 1987—6 years after being identified. According to the CDC, as of the late 2010s, AIDS is still killing about 5,000 annually. Much like every other health crisis, the AIDS epidemic disproportionately affects lower-income populations and people of color, and additionally gay and bisexual men.

These groups are further negatively impacted by societal attitudes when it comes to prevention, intervention, and memorialization issues for death trends in these communities. Film and literature reflect many of these societal values of who is deserving of death and undeserving of memorialization. So much so that there are tropes such as "bury your gays," "dead lesbian syndrome," and "death by sex." In each of these popular to-the-point-of-being-a-joke tropes, individuals displaying transgressive attributes, such as homosexuality or promiscuity in women, are far more likely to die in a film or television series than their counterparts who observe societally accepted behavior.[75]

A temporary AIDS memorial was conceived circa 1978 in the form of a quilt by gay rights activist Cleve Jones. According to the National AIDS Memorial website, after learning of the staggering losses in his hometown of San Francisco, he collected names to display on the walls of the San Francisco Federal Building. The sight of the patchwork

[75] *TV Tropes* website, tvtropes.org.

name plaques inspired what became the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. The quilt was displayed at the National Mall in Washington D.C. during the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights October 11, 1987.

It covered a space larger than a football field and included 1,920 panels. Six teams of eight volunteers ceremonially unfolded the Quilt sections at sunrise as celebrities, politicians, families, lovers, and friends read aloud the 1,920 names of the people represented in Quilt." The quilt toured nationally raising funds for AIDS service organizations. With each stop, more panels were added. "The Quilt returned to Washington, D.C. in October of 1988, when 8,288 panels were displayed on the Ellipse in front of the White House . . . Today, the AIDS Memorial Quilt is an epic 54-ton tapestry that includes nearly 50,000 panels dedicated to more than 105,000 individuals." The quilt was held by the Library of Congress held the quilt until 2019 when it transferred the quilt to the National AIDS Memorial in San Francisco, California.[76] The quilt is ever expanding as new panels are added each year. Today, portions of the quilt are displayed at schools, churches, community-oriented locations and the quilt has a digital life through an interactive portal on the National AIDS Memorial website where you can zoom in to read individual panels. The enormity of the quilt reduces the panels to pixels if you try to view it all at once.

[76] *National AIDS Memorial* website, aidsmemorial.org.

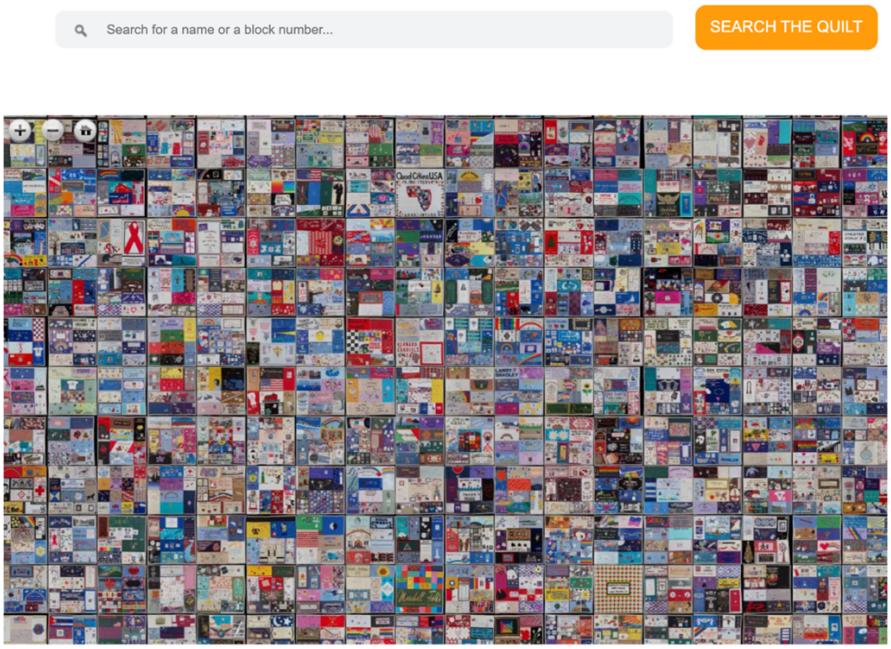

Figure 10. National AIDS Memorial Quilt section.

Figure 11. National AIDS Memorial Quilt panels.

Despite the staggering number of deaths, the only national AIDS memorial was not conceived or originally supported by the federal government but rather came from a grassroots movement and decision by a few individuals to create a space where their loved ones could be remembered. The memorial was first conceived in 1988 and broke ground in 1991. It was not until 1996 that it was recognized as a national memorial by the federal government. Nestled inside the San Francisco Golden Gate Park is the 10-acre National AIDS Memorial Grove, a peaceful place to remember lost loved ones or to gather. The centerpiece of the memorial is a flagstone engraved with names called the Circle of Friends, established in 1996.[77]

Figure 12. Circle of Friends in the National AIDS Memorial Grove, image by *San Francisco Gate*.

[77] Ibid.

It is apparent that not just who dies but also the manner of death weighs heavily on how a single death or many deaths are remembered in the public memory and physical realm. Deaths from illness, suicide, or other perceived "weaknesses" do not receive the same care. American cultural attitudes surrounding death determine funding for memorialization and set laws. For example, medical aid in dying is legal in only nine states and D.C. despite overwhelming support in the medical and hospice worker community.[78]

What Role does Patriotism Play in Memorialization?

As Kenneth Foote defined the parameters for sanctification in *Shadowed Ground*, one of the prime reasons was the veneration of heroes.[79] Foote focuses on individual national heroes like McKinley, Lincoln, or Kennedy. He touches on the topic of the veneration of local war dead as heroes, but this can conceivably be expanded and generalized. I assert that deaths linked to patriotism and American nationalism are higher on the hierarchy of death than those of civilians, regardless of the manner of death.

In American culture, suicide is stigmatized. As a result, there is little recognition of the mass death toll from suicide. In 2019, more than 47,500 Americans died by

[78] Compassion and Choices, "Medical Aid In Dying is Not Assisted Suicide, Suicide or Euthanasia," https://compassionandchoices.org/about-us/medical-aid-dying-not-assisted-suicide/

[79] Foote, *Shadowed Ground.*

suicide—approximately 1 every 11 minutes. There were 1.4 million suicide attempts, and 3.65% of the U.S. population reported contemplating suicide, qualifying it as a public health crisis. The majority of memorials dedicated to suicide victims are digital in nature, consisting of websites scrolling names or photos of the dead. On April 21, 2006, the Parents of Suicides and Families of Suicides dedicated an International Suicide Memorial Wall in Columbia, Tennessee, displaying just over 500 memorial tiles in 2016 and scrolling 18,906 names on the companion website.[80]

Mission 22, an organization dedicated to providing programs and services for soldiers experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or similar issues, recognized that there was not a national monument dedicated to veteran suicide. More than 20 percent of the daily suicides in America are veterans. To memorialize those who survived war but died as casualties in the aftermath, they erected a monument that travels from city to city. The War at Home Memorial is made of poignant 10-foot-tall cut-out sheets of metal where the soldiers are displayed as negative space representing the space where the veterans should be with accompanying "dog tags." Like other suicide memorialization websites, Mission 22 also has a digital recognition wall webpage. In 2021, the memorial is scheduled to find a permanent home in Veteran's Park Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.[81] The veteran suicide

[80] *The Suicide Memorial Wall* website.
[81] *Mission 22*. https://mission22.com/programs/memorials

memorial received far more public support and funding in donations than any effort to memorialize suicide has in the past.

Figure 13. The Capt. Jeff Kuss USMC Memorial in Smyrna, Tennessee.

A similar anecdotal comparison of the influence of patriotic associations can be made by the reactions to airplane crash deaths in Tennessee in 2016. Blue Angels No. 6 F/A-18 navy stunt pilot Marine Captain Jeff Kuss crashed his plane on June 2, 2016, in Smyrna, TN, while preparing for an air show result of pilot error and exhaustion.[82] Kuss was not from the area and had no ties other than the location of his death other than the airshow held annually in Smyrna. A grassroots campaign to fund a memorial

[82] Meghan Myers, "The mistakes that led to a deadly Blue Angels crash — and how the Navy wants to prevent them," *Navy Times, September, 15, 2016. https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2016/09/15/the-mistakes-that-led-to-a-deadly-blue-angels-crash-and-how-the-navy-wants-to-prevent-them/*

garnered $1.4 million, and a memorial was erected featuring a decommissioned Blue Angel F/A-18C Hornet (similar plane) from the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, FL.[83] The crash was extensively covered in the news.

In comparison, deaths of nonveterans may not receive the same amount of veneration or notice. The same year a small private Cessna 182 aircraft nearing the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Tennessee airport crashed in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, killing a family of three. According to a release from the National Park Service, the three on the plane were 41-year-old David Starling, 42-year-old Kim Smith, and 8-year-old Hunter Starling, all from Bradford County, Florida. No memorial or designation site efforts were made in Tennessee or Florida. The plane crash hardly received any coverage in the Tennessee news, appearing only in a local paper reporting on another small plane crash. No images of the crash site were released. The cause of this crash was also ruled as pilot error. The Smoky Mountains are known for sudden low visibility conditions, and private pilot David Starling was not rated for instrument-only flight.[84] While these stories are more complex than just the stated factors, it is worth asking the question if the sites had been reversed, would the public response have been different. In 2021, a small passenger plane crashed in Smyrna, Tennessee, only a few

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[83] *The Capt. Jeff Kuss USMC Memorial in Smyrna Tennessee* website. http://captjeffkussusmcmemorial.com/

[84] Associated Press, "Three killed in a small plane crash in Great Smoky Mountains National Park," *Chattanooga Times Free Press,* December 27, 2016. https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2016/dec/27/plane-reported-missing-possibly-crashed-great-smoky-mountains/404695/ (paywall bypass https://outline.com/EZCFxP).

miles from the crash site of the Blue Angel plane. While it did receive more coverage than the Starling-Smith crash, no memorialization efforts have been made.

Conclusion on Memorialization in the U.S.

It is difficult to make arguments for disparities in memorialization, which is essentially looking for voids in the landscape. However, we can build on other ideas surrounding adjacent subjects to make sense of why some types of death garner more attention at the national level. One can simply walk around Washington D.C. to see the many imposing monument raised to war causalities but finding memorials to mass death outside of patriotic causes is far more challenging. The hierarchy of death can be expanded to understand memorialization practices in the U.S. The mode of death dramatically impacts how deaths are commemorated. By looking at the response to deaths from the 1918-1920 influenza and AIDS pandemic, we can watch as similar patterns unfold with Covid-19 in the present. Lastly, it is worth asking how significant of a role patriotism and nationalistic attitudes play as they elevate “meaningful deaths.” Through funding, rallying behind a cause, or media attention, cultural attitudes shape the landscape of this category of dark tourism in the United States through.

Chapter Four

Magic Thinking in Early America

Magic runs deep in the roots of American history. Salem, Massachusetts has indisputably capitalized on its historic identity with by witchcraft. Likewise, the French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana is littered with Voodoo shops that are largely dismissed as tourist traps, despite the genuine connections of supernatural practices regardless of commodification. Embracing magical thinking is not a new phenomenon but rather dates back to the earliest records in American history. Magical thinking permeates early American history, and the cultural remnants are still present today. You can not accurately interpret the motivations of historical actors or their experiences and culture without taking this portion of their cultural identity into account. The historical exploration of these avenues leaves much left to be desired. However, we can see the impact of magical thinking clearly demonstrated in early responses to epidemic illnesses and the deaths which followed.

The scholarship that explores magical thinking in colonial New England often stems from trying to identify the physical or psychological illnesses which were attributed to supernatural workings or by trying to understand the social motives of individuals or groups. Native American spiritualism is presented as a means of self-

preservation, with many norms much like the European colonials with a different pantheon. Historians frame the relationship of Africans to magic and healing as methods of resistance and reclamation of power. In all of these cultures, those seeking to make sense of their indecipherable circumstances looked for someone or something to blame, be it an individual, evil spirit, or unnatural imbalance.[85]

In *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*, Frank Snowden described the historic responses of fear to illness and how these responses often led to suffering communities looking for someone to blame. Communities afflicted with plague responded with mass hysteria, violence, and religious revivals as people sought to assuage an angry god. They also looked anxiously within their midst to find the guilty parties responsible for so terrible a disaster. For people who regarded the disease as divine retribution, those responsible were sinners. Plague thus repeatedly gave rise to scapegoating and witch-hunting. Alternatively, for those inclined to the demonic interpretation of disease, those responsible were the agents of a homicidal human

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[85] A sampling of useful scholarship includes: Frank M. Snowden, *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Anne C. Zeller, "Arctic Hysteria in Salem?" *Anthropologica*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1990); D. Landy, "Pibloktoq (hysteria) and Inuit nutrition: possible implication of hypervitaminosis A," *Social Science & Medicine*, 21, No. 2 (1985); Lawrence B. Goodheart, "The distinction between witchcraft and madness in colonial Connecticut." History of Psychiatry, 13 (2002); George S. Snyderman, "Witchcraft, and Allegany Seneca Medicine," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 127, No. 4 (1983); Paul Kelton, "Avoiding the Smallpox Spirits," *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2004); John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Jeffrey E. Anderson, *Conjure in African American Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Billy Middleton, "Two-Headed Medicine: Hoodoo Workers, Conjure Doctors, and Zora Neale Hurston," *The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South* 53 (2016); and Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

conspiracy. Frequently, vigilantes hunted down foreigners and Jewish people in particular or sought out witches and poisoners.[86] Throughout the text, the theme of placing blame is apparent. To tell the stories surrounding death and illness, which center on dark tourism sites, is to tell the stories of the outcasts, pariahs, and disenfranchised groups of societies.

Diagnosing Ills in Colonial New England

Physical anthropologist Anne Zeller offered an interesting medical explanation for the behavior of the young women in Salem who accused others in their community of witchcraft and exhibited a wide array of symptoms, including changes in personality, convulsions, pain, outbursts, delusions, and erratic behavior. In response to prior scholarship that explained the behaviors: political and psychological stress, actual demonic possession, lying, and ergotism, Zeller argued that the young women may have been suffering from *pibloktoq* or Arctic hysteria, a condition that was not identified until the 1890s and not understood until well into the twentieth century. This phenomenon is generally considered a "culture-bound syndrome" that is documented in the Inughuit Inuit people of Greenland who live in the north, close to the Arctic circle. It is typically,

[86] Snowden, *Epidemics and Society,* 29.

but not exclusively, exhibited in women and is associated with the cultural repression of personality in women.[87]

Medical historian Norman Gevitz, on the other hand, investigated the role of physicians in the New England witchcraft trials. In "'The Devil Hath Laughed at the Physicians': Witchcraft and Medical Practice in Seventeenth-Century New England," he asserted that the position of a physician in a community was much like that of a minister. Namely, doctors only lasted as long as they went along with the wishes of the community. He believes some instances indicate physicians begrudgingly accepted supernatural explanations in order to satisfy the preconceptions of patients and their families. He also argued, the medical arts played a significant and sometimes pivotal role in the witchcraft controversies of seventeenth-century New England. Not only were physicians and surgeons the principal professional arbiters for determining natural versus preternatural signs and symptoms of disease, but they also occupied key legislative, judicial, and ministerial roles relating to witchcraft proceedings. "Forty-six male physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries . . . served on coroners' inquests, performed autopsies, took testimony, issued writs, wrote letters, or committed people to prison, in addition to diagnosing and treating patients." [88]

[87] D. Landy, "Pibloktoq (hysteria) and Inuit nutrition," 173–185.
[88] Goodheart, "The distinction between witchcraft and madness in colonial Connecticut," 7.

Scholars also question the mental conditions that might have afflicted the New England witchcraft accusers, a concern that also has occasionally extended to the accused in an attempt to understand why these particular women and men might have been accused. Lawrence B. Goodheart posed the question whether or not the witches of the colonial past actually the mentally ill? To find an answer, Goodheart turned to the social norms and legal statutes of the day. A practice descended from the community style of English parishes dictated the community would be responsible for the poor mentally ill (only those from that community) in the cases their families would or could not, as was the usual practice. As he puts it, "Home care, folk remedies and religious guidance were the norm."[89] Medicine in colonial New England was a mix of folklore, Galenic humoralism, and Paracelsian chemistry replete with recommendations of bleeding and purging or administration of "medicines," partnered with the belief illness was primarily a spiritual affliction.

They did not distinguish between illness of the body and mind, but rather mental illness was seen as symptomatic of a bodily woe. According to Goodheart's argument, they did, however, distinguish between insanity and demonic possession. Puritans believed a person must willingly accept alignment with the forces of evil, and in order to do so, they must be *compos mentis* or mentally competent by their legal standards. I

[89] Ibid., 434.

question Goodheart's claim since children as young as four years old and homeless, indigent women were arrested as witches in Salem.

The works cited here all sought diagnose and identify the physical or psychological illnesses that were attributed to supernatural workings by Puritans. They did not frame Puritan beliefs in terms of survival tactics or methods of resistance. Historians interpreting magical thinking by Native Americans find the same common thread of an individual or individuals believed to be witches working with spirits or evil to cause illness but instead frame these beliefs in an entirely different way.

Spirits and Survival Responses in Native American Cultures

Magic in Native American Cultures has long been of scholarly interest. For example, George Snyderman first interviewed the Seneca in the 1940s and continued the relationship through at least 1983. From this research, he published "Witches, Witchcraft, and Allegany Seneca Medicine," noting that documenting indigenous history is difficult since many Native American groups believe the histories shouldn't be written down or told to outsiders.[90]

Snyderman found that the Seneca, largest of the Six Nations,[91] often attributed illness to sorcerers. There were documented cases of executions of witches believed to

[90] Snyderman, "Witches, Witchcraft, and Allegany Seneca Medicine," 275.

[91] Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy consists of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora tribes of the Great Lakes area.

have cursed an individual. The belief also managed to drive out missionaries who could do things like predict solar eclipses but not cure an illness and whose presence often coincided with widespread illness. The accusation of the blame for an illness was enough motivation for these priests to flee after seeing what happened to witches. It was common for an ill person to name someone they believed had cursed them with the illness.

Snyderman points out that in some instances, if the accused "witch" admitted their evil acts and promised to never do so again, they might be spared. This admission was also the only way many of the women in the puritanical New England witch trials avoided death. The Seneca believe this type of confession of wrongdoing is the first step to repairing one's health (which encompassed physical and spiritual), while the Puritans focused on the soul.

These beliefs have been documented through the 1940s in spite of some having converted to Christianity and persist today. The Seneca interviewed by Snyderman said they believe "white doctors" are unable to diagnose illness caused by spirits or witches and still employ plant and animal sacrifices to appease the spirits.[92]

Various epidemics were often blamed on specific evil spirits. During the outbreak of an illness that followed a period of flooding, likely typhoid or malaria, the Creeks of

[92] Snyderman, "Witches, Witchcraft, and Allegany Seneca Medicine," 276.

the Southeastern U.S. "believed they had become haunted and possessed by vengeful spirits" and claimed to be warned by dreams and apparitions telling them to flee the area.[93] They consequently relocated their settlements and survived the epidemic. The beliefs that manifested as medical practices of avoidance, quarantine, and palliative care may have preserved some measure of safety. The epidemics in the late 1700s had lower death rates than those in the earlier half of the century. Kelton points out that without vaccination or antibiotics, their herbal remedies and ceremonies were less harmful than the European methods such as bleeding, purging, and administering harmful chemicals.[94]

Native Americans in what is now the Western U.S. shared these beliefs in spirits and magic to help or hurt. In "Blood Came from Their Mouths: Tongva and Chumash Responses to the Pandemic of 1801," scholar Edward D. Castillo, researched an account of Tongva shaman being paid to use sorcery to cause illness as revenge. In order to put an end to a mysterious and deadly fever outbreak that happened soon after, the captain of the cursed group found the sorcerer's home, murdered everyone within it, and destroyed the artifacts believed to have been used in the casting, followed by burning their bodies to prevent resurrection.

[93] Kelton, "Avoiding the Smallpox Spirits," 49.
[94] Ibid., 63.

Even though many of Native American cultural responses of blaming witches or evil spirits were nearly identical to many norms of the European colonials, with the exception of a different pantheon, Native American spiritualism is presented as a means of self-preservation. Historians view the Native American magical thinking in response to illness as a way that they reinforced their religious beliefs. This narrative of survival and self-preservation is echoed in the literature examining enslaved Africans living in the American South.

Hoodoo as a Method of Resistance and Healing of the Soul

In his book, *Conjure in African American Society,* historian Jeffrey Anderson documents how African beliefs of conjure, Voodoo, and hoodoo evolved in the Americas.[95] His social history spans 1800–1999 and traced the major shifts surrounding hoodoo's roots in slavery, the Great Migration, the Jim Crow Era, the New Age movement, and to the modern era where hoodoo has been largely commercialized—but retains its place as a path to "spiritual enlightenment and practical supernaturalism" for many blacks and whites.[96]

Anderson relates the use of alternate power structures for a group who had been effectively stripped of most of their agency, left to find their methods of resistance

[95] Generally, these terms are defined as: hoodoo—folk magic and "rootwork" practiced by enslaved Africans, but not a religion; conjure—the act or practice of this magic; and Voodoo—the religion. These vary according to different sources and are more nuanced.

[96] Anderson, *Conjure in African American Society*, 150.

that preserved and formed their cultural identity. Their use of pharmacologically active herbs gave these practitioners tangible power that often becomes an important source for social regulation, both in terms of power to heal or harm. As a result, hoodooists were able to achieve positions of importance in the community—another avenue of power for oppressed people—especially the women who had few vocational options after slavery. Their perceived power offered them protections much later than one would think. Josephine Gray was suspected of murdering two husbands and a lover, the first in 1974, but avoided substantial prosecution and prison until 1999 because those around her were too afraid of her "supernatural abilities" to speak out.[97]

Even today, these beliefs in the use of herbalism permeate the elderly African American religious community, with 93 percent considering it necessary for health.[98] In his later works, Anderson makes an interesting case by framing hoodoo as folk psychiatry, suggesting practitioners often fell into a catch-all "informal caretaker," but as he points out, they were positioned to understand the culture and beliefs of someone in need of help. He follows the evolution of conjure intertwining with the Black Spiritualism and Pentecostalism but doesn't give enough credit to the cultural exchange of colonial, indigenous, and African beliefs existing in the same space.

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[97] Ibid., 159.
[98] Jeffrey E. Anderson, *Hoodoo, Voodoo, and Conjure* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 23.

On the other hand, English professor Billy Middleton characterizes the hybridization of European Christianity and African Spiritualism as a method preserving culture and traditional practices. Rather than rejecting what was being forced on them and suffering the consequences, folding their own beliefs into a new framework helped individuals keep cultural identity. Middleton, takes the work of anthropologist, ethnographer, author, and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston to create a historical perspective on the response to medical deprivation and abuse found in both the enslavement and Jim Crow South. Middleton emphasizes that Black Magic practitioners catered to and recognized the need for healing of body and soul. Likewise, these practices stood apart from other early American magical practices by not dividing the good from the bad—the rigid way Native Americans and New England colonists did. "This pharmacosmic view of physical health reveals the dichotomies of good and evil or body and spirit are unstable, perhaps even nonexistent in Voodoo."[99] "Two-headed doctors" likewise is a reference to the dual nature of practitioners.

The narrative of resistance and reclamation of power is best articulated in Sharla M. Fett's *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Fett focused on the experiences of women in the context of gendered slavery and their position as healers. This work includes a deeper context of the medical horrors of slavery that included nonconsensual medical experiments without sedation,

[99] Middleton, "Two-Headed Medicine," 158.

dehumanizing circumstances, and infringement upon their sexuality and reproductive autonomy through rape, forced sterilization, and coerced "husbandry," which all insultingly were used to propagate ideas surrounding scientific racism. Fett examines the gender differences as well as the racial ones. Owing to the systemic rape of African women, it was legislated that the condition of slavery was inheritable from the mother, regardless of the father's status.[100] She examines the conditions surrounding medicine in the antebellum South—a surprisingly democratic landscape of experimentalism that extended to Native American herbalism and hoodoo, among many other avenues.

Scapegoating and blame-placing are recurring themes in the history of epidemics. In desperation to place blame, many turned to supernatural explanations. Both Puritan colonists and Native American tribes subscribed to the belief that when someone is ill, they may have been cursed by a witch. This magical thinking, whether placed on God's wrath, the Devil's work, or evil spirits, often led to placing blame on outsiders in a community–both in terms of immigrant groups and individuals who didn't adhere to the cultural norms, the poor, or on a community level someone for whom the accuser held a personal grudge.

The approaches and narratives vary widely in regard to different groups. The scholarship that explores magical thinking in colonial New England often stems from

[100] Fett, *Working Cures,* 4.

trying to identify or disprove the physical or psychological illnesses which were attributed to supernatural workings or by trying to understand the social motives of individuals or groups. Native American spiritualism is presented as a means of self-preservation, with many norms much like the European colonials with a different pantheon. Historians frame the relationship of Africans to magic and healing as methods of resistance and reclamation of power. In all of these cultures, those seeking to make sense of their indecipherable circumstances looked for magical explanations and methods. These studies on blaming witches, endowing herbs with magic, negotiating with spirits, or practicing rituals all spell out a common sentiment. The belief in magic shaped the lives of early Americans. These themes inform the dark history properties and experiences throughout the United States.

Much work has yet to be done to flesh out this area of scholarship. As of right now, there seem to be more questions than answers, attempts to label without nuanced understanding which disregards larger identity, rare ethical concerns voiced beyond judgment for engaging with “dark” places, a limited consideration of how the public interprets spaces, and little recognition of the disparities found in memorialization in the U.S.

The evidence for how ingrained magical thinking is in the history of America is too strong to deny. Outside of properties associated with the New England witch trials, few historic sites acknowledge or explore their magical thinking pasts. “Witch windows” are just a footnote in New England architecture studies but speak to how these beliefs

shaped every aspect of their lives. How many plantations include rootwork and conjure in their descriptions of the lives of enslaved Africans? Is it time for magical thinking to become a larger part in the public interpretation of historic places?

Chapter Five

Architecture in Horror and Fiction

"The setting of a story is everything. It creates mood and atmosphere. It triggers memories. It helps our minds fill in the blanks. Adding tension and suspense where there was only words and images. What would *The Shining* be like without the long hotel hallways of the Overlook?" – Aaron Mahnke, *Lore*

Dark tourism properties rely on stories, horrific associations, and the "look" of the place. Architecture matters, and as Henri Lefebvre told us almost 50 years ago, that fact is hardly suprising since we encode spaces with meaning.[101] The federalist style alerts us to an impending interaction with an institution. A vernacular exterior signals the type of space, both social and physical, we will likely find inside. Architecture sets our expectations of how we will experience a space. Likewise, Lefebvre believed that creating a space is an ongoing process. A lovely Victorian home that might once have represented opulence and an attempt to bring modern European styles into American architecture, has since evolved to include a connotation of creepiness. The stories we

[101] Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace.*

tell as a culture leave an indelible mark on the structures they feature, and their space and feel further shaped our reactions.

Figure 14. Cover of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* featuring a Victorian home.

Close your eyes and picture what you imagine to be a haunted house up on a hill. The chances are good that you conjured an image of a dilapidated Victorian home. Our associations with particular styles of architecture have permeated throughout American culture. These mental and emotional ties can be seen echoing through film, literature, audio media, and oral traditions. The poster for the film *Arkham Sanitarium* reads, "Some places are built evil."[102] Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* says, "It was an evil house from the beginning, a house that was born bad."[103] This sentiment is repeated in the tagline of Stephen King's *Rose Red*, "Some houses are born bad."[104] Over and over, the assertion that evil can originate with the structure is

[102] *Arkham Sanitarium,* Survivor Films promotional materials, 2013.
[103] Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House.* (New York: Penguin Books, 1959).
[104] Stephen King, *Rose Red,* American Broadcasting Company miniseries, 2002.

made, which is an interesting comparison to much of the thought surrounding dark tourism–the idea of a neutral place becoming tarnished or sacred as a result of what takes place there.[105]

Figure 15. Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad* (1925), Museum of Modern Art website.

What is Creepy?

Why are Victorian style homes more frequently depicted as haunted than any other American architectural style? Art Historian Sarah Burns suggests in her article

[105] Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, ed., *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Tonawanda: Channel View Publications, 2009).

"Better for Haunts: Victorian Houses and the Modern Imagination" that public opinion shifted due to the depiction in photography and art. She gives *Haskell's House* (1924) and *House by the Railroad* (1925) by Edward Hopper and Charles Addams' *The Addams Family* cartoons, which debuted in *The New Yorker* in 1938 as prime examples of this turn in public perception.

These artists took the sharp lines, spires, and intricate scrollwork and placed them into deep shadow, high contrast, abandoned, looming towers that harkened back to a darker age. "Fellow painter Guy Péne du Bois—one of the few intimate confidantes of the famously taciturn Hopper—hinted at other meanings embedded in his friend's architectural portraits: 'There is…a stillness which has its counterpart in the calm preceding a storm, an ominous lull, eery [sic], void, inhuman. These dead American houses–Victorian in architecture generally, ugly, whimsical exaggerations in tortured wood—are haunted.'"[106] Burns also includes the inclusion of at-home funeral proceedings in photography. In the twentieth century, this practice had mostly died off with the exception of isolated traditional pockets.

As Burns concluded, "In the early twentieth century, all things Victorian–including houses– came under such a withering onslaught that if words alone could

[106] Sarah Burns, "Better for Haunts: Victorian Houses and the Modern Imagination," *American Art,* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall 2012), 6.

destroy, not a single structure would have been left standing."[107] The July 1928 edition of *House and Garden* magazine included the feature, "Laying the Ghost of a Victorian House," which advised removing the decorative trim, overhanging gables, and ridgepoles and favored painting a monochromatic palette and enlarging windows to make the house appear closer to the Colonial Revival style.

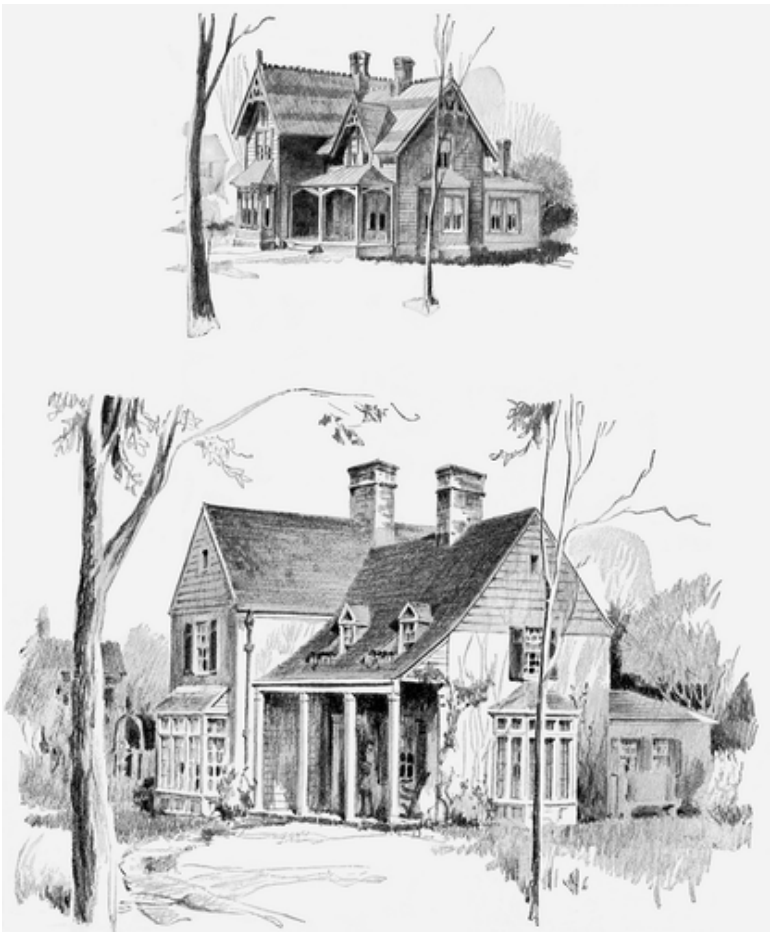

Figure 16. "Laying the Ghost of a Victorian House," *House and Garden 54* (July 1928), p. 68. Indiana University Libraries, photo used by Burns, "Better for Haunts," 9.

[107] Ibid., 4.

In his 1938 book *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America, 1865-1895,* Lewis Mumford wrote, "The commonest axiom of history is that every generation revolts against its fathers and makes friends with its grandfathers." This observation, thought Mumford, explains why the generations that lived through the miserable decades with their own economic depression following the Civil War might have rejected Victorian architecture for what it represented to them (and certainly why we see this shift in America, but not in England), but not why it is still so pervasive today. Perhaps this initial rejection, followed by the wars and the Great Depression that occurred in the early part of the twentieth century, contributed to why so many of these expensive-to-maintain houses were abandoned and left to ruin.

Figure 17. *Psycho* house, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* film still.

The cultural shift most fully manifested in film in the latter half of the twentieth century. By then, these houses had time to become properly haunted. Most films that wanted to evoke a haunted, chilling setting chose Victorian houses. The iconic Bates home with the skeleton in the basement in *Psycho* (1960), the many depictions of *The Haunting of Hill House* (novel 1959, The Haunting films in 1963, 2002, and series in 2018), the menacing house

that children dare each other to approach on Neibolt street in *It* (1986 novel and 1990 and 2017 films) and *It: Chapter Two* (2019), the lighter depictions that use the trope like Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) and Casper (1995), the story of a house that lures people to their deaths and collects ghosts in *American Horror Story: Murder House* (2011), and *Mother!* (2017), which takes place entirely in an isolated home, all feature the Victorian home as the centerpiece.

Countless tales use the trope of the old crumbling Victorian house up on the hill, luring people to their deaths or hiding some secret within its walls. Both the story of *The Haunting of Hill House* and the film depiction of *Winchester* feature an ongoing battle

Figure 18. Top: *Winchester*; Bottom: *The Haunting of Hill House* (film still comparison of post-earthquake scenes)

with ghosts inhabiting the house until a climactic last stand during which the ghosts unleash such turbulent psychic energy it causes an earthquake. In Winchester, the catastrophic 1906 San Francisco earthquake was attributed to the fury of restless spirits.

It is interesting that in the story of *Winchester* the constant construction was meant to keep the ghosts at bay, and in *The Haunting of Hill House,* it is the restoration efforts that awaken the paranormal activity. The fictional architect-owner of Hill House is described as eccentric and deviant. The Hill House is built without any square angles with the doors hung "wrong," so they swing shut on their own. "No wonder it's impossible to find your way around. Add up all these wrong angles, and you get one big distortion in the house as a whole."[108] Both houses are frightening for the element of not being able to find your way around. All these illustrations combine to build up a code in our cultural lexicon–Victorian houses are haunted, even if only in our imaginations.

Figure 19. *The Haunting of Hill House*, Netflix promotional materials.

[108] *The Haunting,* directed by Robert Wise, Warner Bros., 1963.

Isolation and Dilapidation Trigger a Biological Response

There is a psychological argument to be made for isolated and dilapidated places as well. Psychologist Frank McAndrew suggests that the feeling of "creepiness" of an empty or old space is connected to our evolutionary instincts in his article, "Evolutionary psychology explains why haunted houses creep us out."[109] Our finely-tuned subconscious scanning for potential threats interprets these spaces with feelings of dread because we cannot determine whether there is a threat or we are safe. Our sense of self-preservation and self-presentation (behavior based on how we desire to be viewed socially) is in conflict with how to react. As McAndrew puts it, "it would be considered bizarre and embarrassing to run screaming out of a house that makes you feel uneasy if there is actually nothing to fear. On the other hand, it could be perilous to ignore your intuition and remain in a place that is dangerous." The "agent detection mechanisms" are not the only factor. An equal weight is given to our perception of how difficult escaping a dangerous situation or receiving aid would become. I argue that one of the cornerstones of the intersection of the horror genre in fiction and American architecture is a sense of isolation stemming from a fear of being without the social safety net of other humans, as evidenced by the Bell Witch story and the Stanley Hotel.

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[109] Frank T. McAndrew, "Evolutionary psychology explains why haunted houses creep us out." *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/evolutionary-psychology-explains-why-haunted-houses-creep-us-out-48209.; Frank T. McAndrew and Sara S. Koehnke, "On the Nature of Creepiness." Basis of a poster presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, New Orleans, (January 2013).

Another important observation by McAndrew is, “We don’t enjoy real creepy situations, and we will avoid them like the plague. Like if there’s a person who creeps you out, you’ll cross the street to get away.”[110] He instead asserts that we enjoy creepy things as a way to interact with the biological sensation of creepiness without the potential risk of harm. He offers this as an explanation for enjoying scary movies, but it can logically extend to visiting haunted houses or playfully macabre dark tourist sites.

[110] McAndrew, “On the Nature of Creepiness,” *Smithsonian Magazine* (online).

Part II American Dark Tourism Sites Case Studies

Part two discusses the interconnectivity of folklore, fiction, architectural styles, cultural attitudes, and management practices that shape the identity of these case studies. Each case study covers different facets of historic preservation of dark tourism locations. Much like dark tourism, there is a broad spectrum of concerns at play in the landscape.

We will explore some preeminent American architectural aspects that commonly feature in horror and dark tourism: the Gothic Revival institution, the Victorian and Gothic Revival vernacular, the isolation of the frontier home, and finally, an isolated Georgian Revival that has been transformed by its link to fiction. The case studies presented here also represent different categories as they relate to dark tourism and the fate of each within the realm of historic preservation. The Danvers State Hospital in Danvers, Massachusetts has been all but destroyed. The remaining building is privately owned and an excellent example of adaptive reuse. The site does not capitalize on its dark past. The Tennessee State Prison in Nashville, Tennessee is another Gothic Revival institutional structure of which only parts remain. The Winchester Mystery House, as Sarah Winchester's Victorian home is now known, is privately owned but ran as a museum utilizing professional historical practices with their research, interpretation, and preservation efforts. The Bell Witch Cabin and Cave in Adams, Tennessee represent the kitsch-roadside potential for dark tourism. The "Bell Cabin" is a reconstruction (of the wrong type of house), and the interpretation is more ghost story than actual history. More than anything, the site serves as a historic preservation tale of caution. Lastly, the

Stanley Hotel owners have capitalized on its relationship to fiction and tangential dark tourism opportunity while also sharing the architectural and non-spooky portions of its past.

Chapter Six

Tennessee State Prison

Tennessee State Prison, formerly Tennessee State Penitentiary
Nashville, Tennessee
Built: Penitentiary in 1829, Prison in 1898
National Register of Historic Places status: Eligible, unregistered
Castellated Gothic Revival Styled Institution

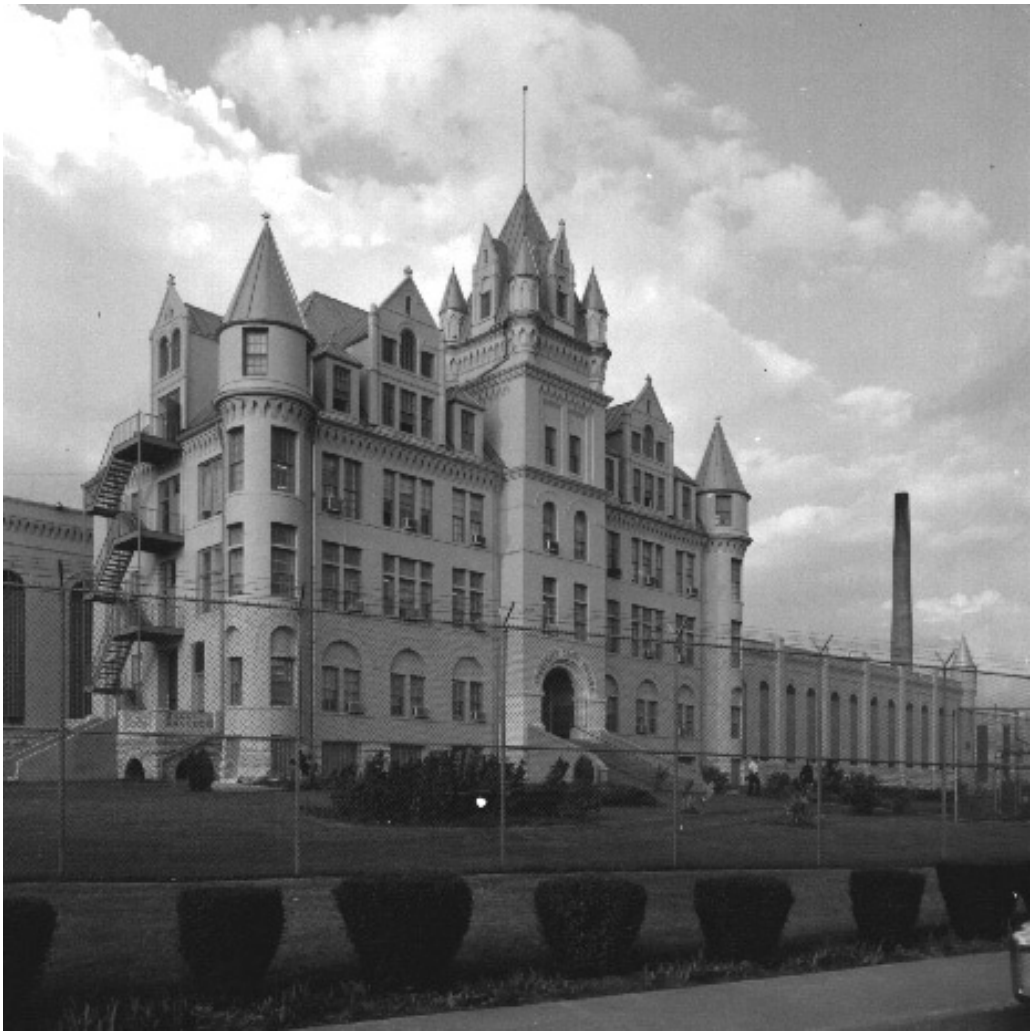

Figure 20. Tennessee State Prison, 1971. Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA).

> Take a look at a castle. Any castle. Now break down the key elements that make it a castle. They haven't changed in a thousand years.
>
> 1: Location. A site on high ground that commands the territory as far as the eye can see.
>
> 2: Protection. Big walls, walls strong enough to withstand a frontal attack.
>
> 3: A garrison. Men who are trained and *willing to kill*. […]
>
> Now you've got yourself a castle.
>
> The only difference between this castle and all the rest is that they were built to keep people out. *This castle is built to keep people in*.
>
> – *The Last Castle*, 2001

Dark tourism is rich with opportunities for adaptive reuse. One such seized opportunity is the Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, [111] which has been turned into a moonshine distillery. It is open for tours, camping, and as an event venue. The state sold the prison to a group of private developers, who wanted to take advantage of public interest in visiting dark sites. The Tennessee State Prison is a site of arguably greater importance to the conservation of the carceral history in Tennessee, but it has yet to have its fate determined.

[111] Heather Bailey, "Hillbilly Skits to Buford Sticks: Sustainable Heritage Tourism in Tennessee," (Ph.D. dissertation, Middle Tennessee State University, 2010).; Kelli Gibson, "Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary: A Historic Landscape of Incarceration," (M.A. thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 2017).

Brief History of the Tennessee State Prison

If not for the guard towers and razor wire, one might mistake the administration building of the Tennessee State Prison for a castle. In fact, the prison's most popular nickname is "The Castle," though it was later referred to as "The Walls" in some sources.[112] The imposing four-story Victorian Gothic structure was constructed of materials indigenous to Tennessee, several stones having been repurposed from the first Tennessee Penitentiary, which stood on Church Street one mile southwest of the Courthouse in Nashville until it was torn down when the Main Prison was constructed in 1898. Chattanooga architect S.M. Patton was the designer. At the time it opened, this penitentiary was considered one of the most modern and humane prisons in the United States,[113] a sentiment that was echoed by visiting President Theodore Roosevelt. It had electricity and steam heat, both generated on-site. The prison was built utilizing convict labor and cost approximately $554,375.57 in 1898.[114]

When the Tennessee State Prison was constructed in 1898, it included a separate women's wing. By 1905, out of the 969 inmates at the Main Prison, there were

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[112] Brian Haas, "From death row to freedom: One Tennessee man's journey," *Tennessean*, May 3, 2014.

[113] 1970 Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) No, TN-33.

[114] J. W. Allen, *Prison operations, from December 1, 1898 to December 1, 1900 [State of Tennessee]:Report of…auditing accountant,* (Reprint from the collections of the University of California Libraries, Originally published 1901). Many sources cite the rounded figure of $500,000, however the report done in 1901 contains this specific sum. Notably, Brushy Mountain only cost $200,275.69– less than half of the TSP in comparison.

"50 women in the prison, all of whom worked in the hosiery factory."[115] The report makes note that their "discipline and sanitary surroundings" under their matron "are good." [116] Women during this period suffered notably far fewer deaths by disease, murder, or work accidents. The Tennessee Prison for Women wouldn't become operational until 1966, coinciding with the racial integration of Tennessee prisons. At this point, male inmates under 21 were kept separately from the "hardened class of criminals." In the same 1905 report, eleven insane inmates were recommended for transfer–indicating that it was the practice at the time to house the insane with the general population.[117]

The prisoners worked either on-site or in the convict lease system. The Main Prison had an ice plant, brickyard, and farm, along with several factories, including the paper box factory, harness company, foundry, hosiery operations, and shoe manufacturing company. In the years 1903 and 1904 alone, the Main Prison yielded a net profit of $52,968.79, whereas Brushy Mountain yielded almost four times that amount, due to their more profitable (and deadly) coal mining operations. The lease system paid the prison for convict labor an average of $0.50-$0.80 per day with an

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[115] E. G. Tollett, *Prison Operations From December 1, 1902, to November 30, 1904 Inclusive, Report of Committee on Part of the Senate to the Fifty-fourth General Assembly, Embracing Report of the Auditing Accountants*, (Originally Published by Authority of House Bill No 936 Chapter 509, Acts of 1905. Nashville: Foster & Webb, 1905), 26.

[116] Ibid., 26.

[117] Ibid., 26

average of 10 hours shifts.[118] While these work hours is what the contracts state, other sources estimate the workday closer to 16 hours a day. One method of circumventing the overcrowding issue was to rotate shifts when men slept and worked so that four men could be kept in a two-man cell.

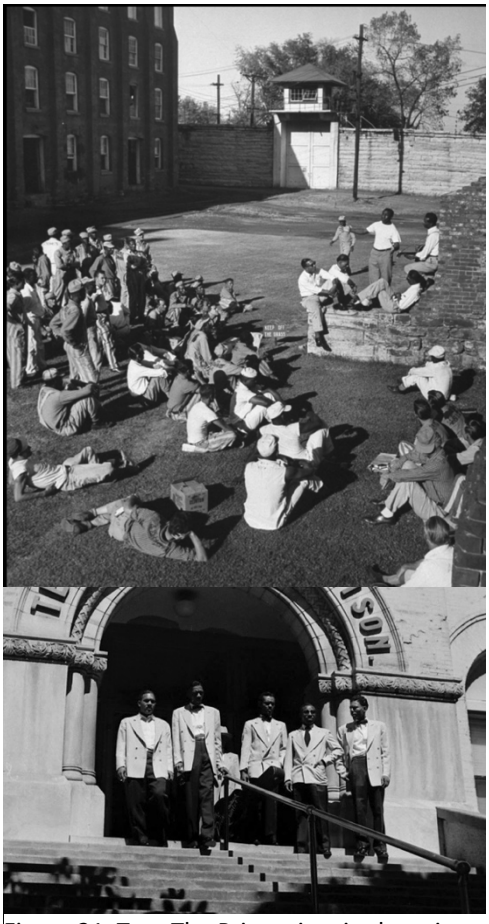

Figure 21. Top: The Prisonaires in the prison yard, *Life* (1953).; Bottom: The Prisonaires, TSLA.

The attraction of the Tennessee State Prison as a dark tourism property is also tied to music and film. Many of the "jailbirds" were also "songbirds." John Lomax conducted field recordings of "work songs" in the 1930s as a part of a WPA Project. The Prisonaires were a quintet made of Tennessee State Prison inmates. Sun Records owner Sam Phillips credited The Prisonaires as the reason that Elvis chose his label.[119] In 1953, while still serving time, they were given passes to record and perform their hit record, *Just Walkin' in the Rain*. Leader Johnny Bragg was known for rehearsing with a bucket on his head to achieve the right acoustics in his cell.

[118] ibid., 9.

[119] *The Prisonaires Documentary – Special Presentation*, Short film, Published September 15, 2013.

Figure 22. Johnny Cash "Performing for the inmates at the Tennessee State Penitentiary in Nashville," (December 1968). J.T. Phillips—Sony Music Archive. Published in *Time*.

Several musicians performed and recorded live albums at the Tennessee State Prison. The most famous of which was the 1976 *A Concert Behind Prison Walls*, starring Johnny Cash, Linda Ronstadt, Roy Clark, and Foster Brooks. The performance was aired on television at the time, but the album wasn't formally released until after Cash's death in 2003. Other famous performers included Sonny James, Eddie Floyd, the Newcomers, Eddy Arnold, Minnie Pearl, and June Carter.[120]

[120] Yoshie Lewis and Brian Allison, *Images of America: Tennessee State Penitentiary* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2014).

Death at the Tennessee State Prison

The first men executed at the Main Prison by hanging in 1909 were William Mitchell and Cecil Palmer.[121] The Tennessee State Prison was the site of executions for most of the state's prisoners sentenced to death, but individual county sheriffs continued to conduct hangings, and mobs often lynched individuals without any help from the state well into the mid-twentieth century.

Indisputably, the single artifact that most connects the Tennessee prison system and death is "Old Smokey," the electric chair that roughly 125 inmates died upon. When the law changed in 1913 requiring inmates to be executed by electrocution rather than hanging, the prison installed the first electric chair. The initial use was on July 13, 1916. Death row inmate Julius Morgan, an African American man who allegedly confessed to and was convicted of "raping a white woman," was executed. The chair was kept in the "death house," a small two-story building situated in the tuberculosis section, which also housed death row inmate cells only a few feet away obscured from view by a cloth curtain.

[121]Yoshie Lewis and Brian Allison, *Images of America: Tennessee State Penitentiary* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2014).

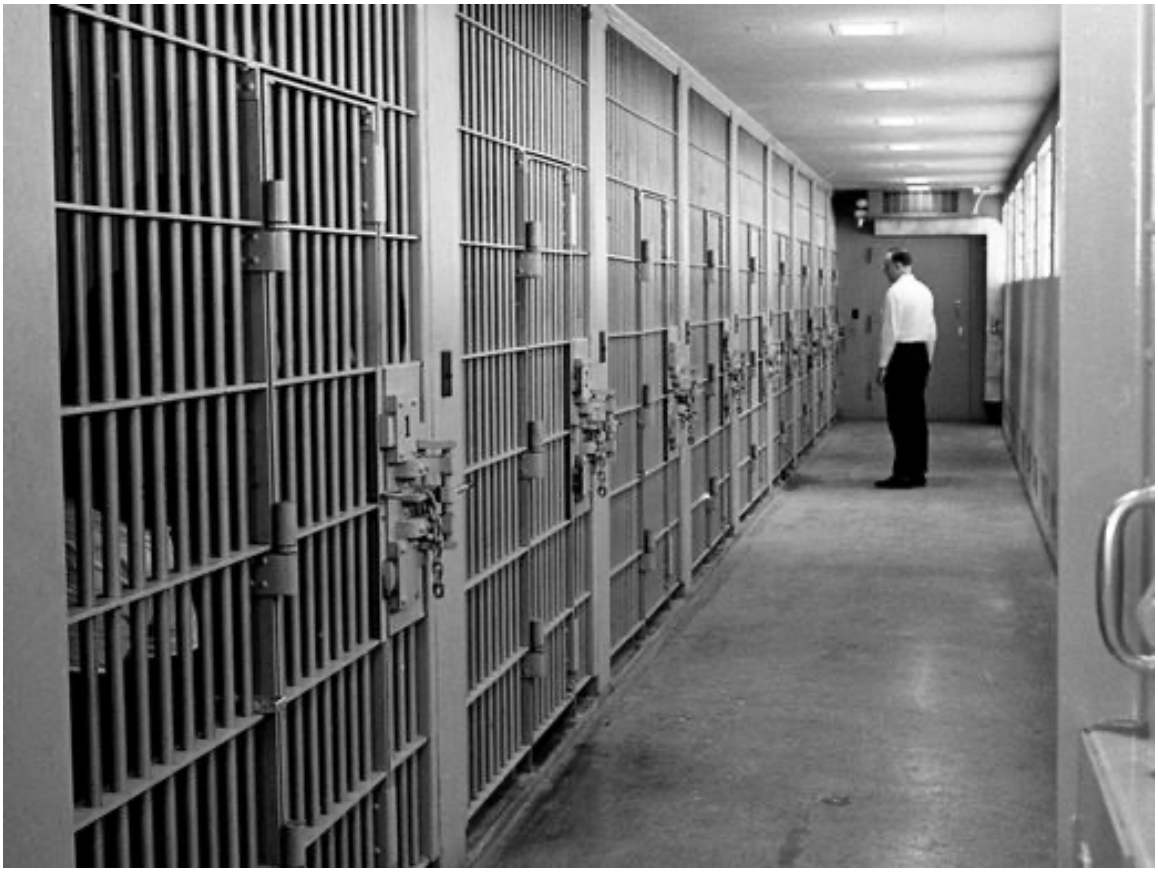

Figure 23. Death Row, 1962. *Tennessean,* 2016.

Unlike the earlier public spectacles, executions were required by state law in the 1910s to be private. One newspaper described it as, "No one is permitted to witness the execution with the exception of the detail assigned by the warden… the prison chaplain and surgeon, one member of the prisoner's family, his spiritual adviser, …the sheriff of the county from which the prisoner is convicted from and the man who throws the switch." While the death was more of a private affair, hundreds of people crowded around when Morgan was moved from the county jail to the state prison just prior to his

death. Markedly, he was held and tried in Memphis rather than Dyersburg, where the crime occurred for fear of mob violence.[122]

Locating "Old Smokey" was the most puzzling part of my research into the Tennessee State Prison. One source claimed it was a part of the artifacts held at the Tennessee State Museum (they do, in fact, have a miniature version which appears to be a souvenir[123]). When I spoke to a museum employee, they said they had heard it was a part of their collection as well, but when they checked their records, they did not have the chair. It showed that it had been in the state's possession at one point but had been sold to Ripley's Believe It or Not in Gatlinburg. When I inquired to Ripley's I was shuffled around for a bit, but finally spoke with someone who said that they have a replica of the chair. The rumor of Ripley's owning "Old Smokey" had been widely circulated by prominent Holocaust-denier Fred Leuchter Jr. The Ripley's corporate public relations representative said that she thought it might be at the Alcatraz East Museum in Pigeon Forge. A museum representative confirmed that they do, in fact, have the authentic, original electric chair that stood in the Tennessee State Prison.

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[122] "DEATH CHAIR'S FIRST VICTIM: Julius Morgan, Negro, Electrocuted at Penitentiary WAS CONVICTED OF RAPE Pays With His Life for Crime Committed in Dyer County. No Fear of Death," *The Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American*, July 13, 1916.

[123] Tennessee State Museum, "Tennessee State Prison Object – Brief (Hitlist)."

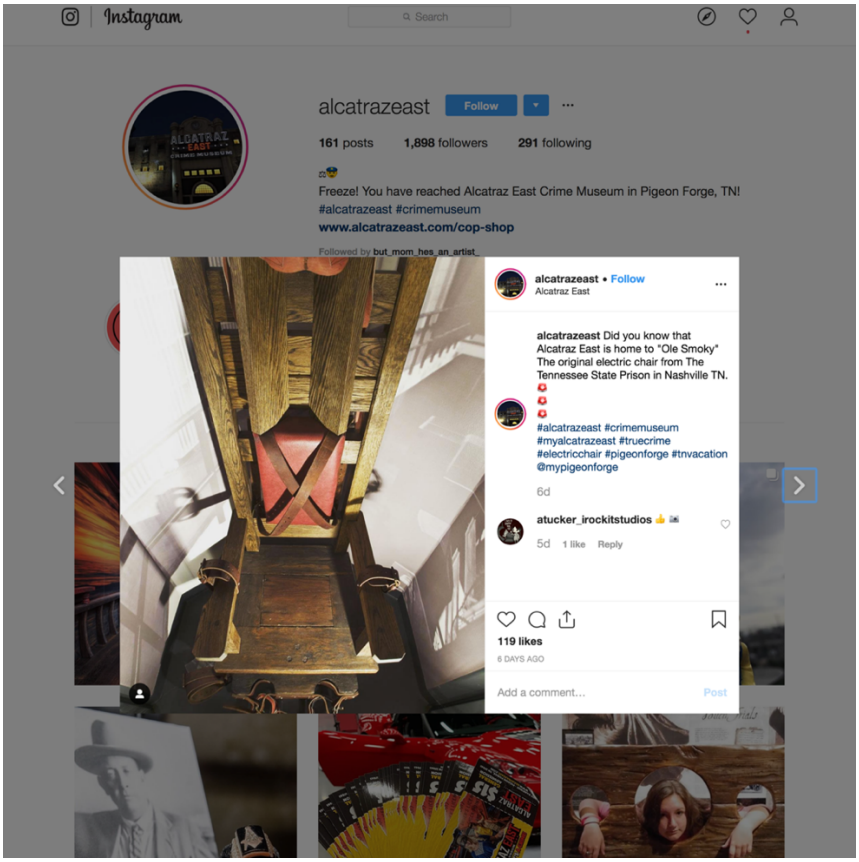

Figure 24. Photo of "Old Smokey" posted by the Alcatraz East Crime Museum to Instagram on April 9, 2019.

The Alcatraz East Crime Museum, an "edutainment" enterprise built in 2016, invites the public to "Explore American history from a different perspective in five unique galleries that burrow deep into criminal profiles, the penal system, victim's stories, crime prevention, forensic science, law enforcement and our justice system." The 25,000 square-foot tourist attraction was designed to reflect both the architectural hallmarks of both the Tennessee State Prison and Alcatraz. "Old Smokey" can be viewed for an admission fee of $25.

Figure 25. Tourist photo of Alcatraz East Crime Museum exterior as shared on social media platform Instagram.

The Tennessee State Museum has 158 records of items connected to the State Penitentiary and Tennessee State Prison in its collection. Items include various hand tools, axes, shovels, barbells, photographs, Former Governor Frank Clement's desk, clothing, furniture, weapons, props from films, and–most peculiarly–former inmate John Murrell's thumb.[124]

[124] Ibid.

Grubbs v Bradley

Eventually, the conditions within the prison became unlivable. In 1983, Scotty Grubb and four other inmates filed a lawsuit, which eventually became a class-action lawsuit, which led to an investigation of the living conditions at the prison. They were found "unfit for human habitation" and "cruel and unusual punishment," a violation of the inmates' eighth amendment rights.[125] The prison was shut down for good in 1992.

The overcrowding meant that some prisoners had as little as 19-square feet in their cells, the noise levels reached "intolerable" deafening proportions in the four-tiered cellblocks, and that communicable disease was a major problem. Plumbing problems contributed to the health risk, and "noxious odors" were common.[126] "151 of the 189 cells in each of Units I-IV contain toilets that are directly cross-connected with the drinking water."[127] There were "minor" problems like broken windows and leaky ceilings, but some problems posed a serious danger, such as the exposed electrical wiring, which was present in every cell block and even the shower facilities. Many cells were almost completely dark. The report reads, "While stating that a minimum of 30 footcandles is considered necessary, the lighting in many cells was measured at less than five footcandles. Indeed, of the 57 readings taken by Mr. Hoover in TSP living units,

[125] *Grubbs v. Bradley*, 552 F. Supp. 1052 - Dist. Court, MD Tennessee 1982.
[126] Ibid., B. 1., III. 2. b., III. 2. c.
[127] Ibid., III. 2. a.

only three met or exceeded the 30 footcandle minimum standards. The lighting level on some lower bunks was as low as 0.2 footcandles."[128]

While the prison was classified as a maximum-security institution, almost 98% of the men housed there were medium-security prisoners, including non-violent offenders. Tennessee had notably longer sentences and more serious laws surrounding property crime than other states–which was noted as a contributing factor to the problem of overcrowding. Violence was commonplace for men living in the prison. Problems included strong-arm robbery, stabbings, rape, and murder. While most of the violence was inmate-on-inmate, prisoners also attacked guards and were the victims of guard-perpetrated violence as well. "The resulting atmosphere of fear, intimidation, threats, and coercion is simply a way of life for TSP inmates."[129] Guards were inadequately trained and had an extremely high turnover. Inmates alleged that the guards were paid off to allow inmates into another's cell in order to rape them. They also claimed that guards would take payment from inmates to bring drugs into the facility, have another guard "bust" the inmate, confiscate the drugs, and then resell them to another inmate.

Possibly the most horrifying element of all the findings was what happened in the hospital wing. Underfunded and understaffed, the hospital was allowing completely untrained, unlicensed, uncertified inmates with no prior medical experience to perform tasks such as x-raying unsupervised, cleaning equipment, and even assisting in major

[128] Ibid., III. 2. b.
[129] Ibid., III. B. 5. This section includes the reports of violence outlined on this page.

surgery (which the hospital performed despite not being equipped or authorized).[130] This was not in the 1880s but rather the 1980s. After the prison closed, it became a popular backdrop for its stunning architecture and site for curious visitors.

[130] Ibid., III. 6. a.–b.

Figure 26. “Run the Green Mile” Tennessee Department of Corrections 5k Walk/Run, May 4, 2019. Photos by author.

Current Use and Public interest

According to the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC), the historic prison grounds are still in use. The location currently houses the Office of Investigations and Compliance, archives, the criminal conviction records unit, transportation division, and other mission-critical areas of the department. TDOC offenders maintain the area of the grounds; therefore, they do not allow public access onto the site other than one opportunity per year, an annual 5K. The public may view, photograph, and tour the site while participating in the "Run the Green Mile" event benefiting Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee. The race sells out annually. Additionally, the prison has been the backdrop for several films and television shows. In 2018, the film revenue was $3,300.

It served as the backdrop for two music videos by Eric Church, including a ballad about being executed by an electric chair called *Lightning.* The prison received much attention in news coverage of riots and hostage situations in the 1970s (during which the National Guard and a tank were brought in). One episode of *Nashville* and two episodes of VH1's *Celebrity Paranormal Project* featured the prison. The short-lived VH1 show episodes "Season 1, Episode 3: The First Warden" and "Episode 8: Dead Men Walking" each feature four celebrities at a time spending the night in the "haunted" prison. They are armed with a thermal imaging camera, EMF meter, and EVP recorder and asked to go on "missions" to various "haunting hot spots" in the prison to perform tasks designed to engage with paranormal entities. The episodes include stories "that happened" at the prison with an incident where prisoners set fire to their bunks in an

attempt to start a riot (which did happen), but the warden ordered the guards to stand down while several men burned to death (I can only find evidence of one death resulting in any of the fires started by inmates and it was not under this condition).[131]

Several ghost stories associated with the prison have been circulated through the media. The above story appeared in several of the paranormal-themed podcasts with episodes about the prison. One account is of an officer in a guard tower hearing footsteps around the base of the tower, who then called for backup. Upon their investigation, barefoot tracks are found that circled the tower and finally ended behind the chair the guard was seated in (they include the chilling detail that the inmates that were to be executed were led down the corridor barefoot–which I could not corroborate anywhere). Another story is about a death row inmate who was convicted of killing six people but was a religious fanatic who believed he had to kill seven and, upon being executed, haunts the prison looking for his seventh victim. The names and details given yielded no results when I tried to find any historical links to a basis for any of these tales.[132]

Since closing its doors, the main function of the prison has been to serve as a film set–first in *Up Against the Wall* as a stand-in for Attica; then as itself in *Marie,* a biopic

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[131] *VH1 Celebrity Paranormal Project*, "Season 1, Episode 3: The First Warden" and "Episode 8: Dead Men Walking," 2006.

[132] *Boos and Brews* Podcast, "Episode 105: Tennessee State Prison vs. Carnton Plantation," 2019.; *Two Hexy Mamas* Podcast, "Episode 18: The Walls and Eastern State Pen," June 18, 2018.;*VH1 Celebrity Paranormal Project*, "Season 1, Episode 3: The First Warden" and "Episode 8: Dead Men Walking," 2006.

of a woman fighting corruption in the Tennessee Department of Corrections; in the comedy, *Earnest Goes to Jail; more serious films such as The Green Mile;* and *The Last Castle*. In the film *The Green Mile*, the filmmakers incorporated the story of a real prisoner, John Sanders, who kept a pet mouse. The annual 5k event is named after the film's title referencing the "long walk" down death row to where the electric chair is and advertised as "Run the Green Mile." Beyond use as a film set, there is a clear public interest in the site. Regular police patrols are required to ward off the frequent trespassers. The TDOC commissioned a short film, *Tennessee State Prison 1898-1992: On the Inside*, in 2016 to offer interested parties a look inside the prison and the grounds. The film was made with drone videography and is artistically beautiful but offers no interpretation or history.

The district 20 representative, Councilwoman Mary Carolyn Roberts, said, "the prime location has investors 'lined up' for a redevelopment." Also a real estate agent, she estimates the property will sell for around $500 million. In 2016, the Nashville Metro Council rezoned the area around the prison to prevent industrial use. She considers the property as a neighborhood landmark (which it is but could easily be argued as a state or maybe even national landmark, as well). "'I think people are more than eager to do it, but we have to somehow, someway convince the state that it's time

to sell it,' Roberts said."[133] The question remains. If the state could be convinced to sell it, what should be done with the property?

The overwhelming success of the prison-turned-tourist-attraction of Alcatraz and Brushy Mountain clearly indicates that if this property and its story were put into the right hands, it could be immensely successful as both a historic site and investment. It even has the advantage over both sites of being centrally located near a major metropolis and not requiring a boat ride to access it.

I would encourage an adaptive reuse model, which has been thoroughly proven a green and sustainable model for development. If a developer or private investment firm stepped in to do what they did at Brushy Mountain, but with an eye to the importance of the history of the site, it could be the best of both worlds. The full history must include a conversation about the racial relations, carceral landscape, leasing system, architecture, and politics of the period. As a dark tourism site, it should incorporate the death and suffering that took place, but also the stories of the lives lived there. The site has been given over to the elements for some time and would require a great deal of work to make it safe for visitors, but that does not mean it is impossible.

[133] Tony Gonzalez, "Tennessee Shows Off Its Old Prison With A Sweet Drone Video In Hopes To Ward Off Trespassers," Nashville Public Radio. October 16, 2016.

Figure 27. Tennessee Department of Corrections photos posted to social media, March 3, 2020.

The primary research and writing for this section concerning the Tennessee State Prison was carried out in 2019. A tornado ravaged Nashville March 3, 2020. Portions of the prison were further demolished and the main building sustained some damage. The author is not aware of any updated Historic American Buildings Survey report outlining

the extent of the damage. From news photography and Tennessee Department of Corrections social media, one of the perimeter towers and a cellblock incurred major damage. A portion of the outer retaining wall which used materials from the original 1839 penitentiary, was destroyed. Large stones were strewn across the prison yard.

The majority of the original architecture still stands. There is a wealth of historical images, documents, and artifacts that could be bought back and reclaimed for the site. More than enough material culture exists to make a museum. With the evidenced public interest, the prison would almost certainly generate income from tours.

Beyond stabilizing the structure, like many sites that are somewhat hazardous, precautions can be taken to protect both the tourist and the site. The Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California offers a tour of unfinished areas that excludes children and requires participants to wear a hard hat. One technique utilized to preserve the dilapidated condition of places while making them safe and accessible is the addition of clear walkways that allow visitors to tread in dangerous areas without risk of injury or obstructing the view. Waivers would be good additional legal protection for the site. Signing a waiver has become a common procedure for most consumers. From escape rooms to virtual reality stations, cave adventures, haunted houses, and skydiving—many recreational activities require a waiver.

Another way to bring the prison back to life while not imposing on the physical structure would be to utilize augmented reality. Tablets with headphones could be checked out as a part of walking tours with sites that activate in specific locations. For example, one could access the photographs or video of *A Concert Behind Prison Walls* while standing in the auditorium where the event took place. GPS fixed historic photos could be imposed over the video feed allowing visitors to move through time.

A variety of tours could be offered:

- General tour for all ages.
- Adults-only tour that goes to the less stable areas where children would be at risk and includes some of the grislier details.
- Architecture enthusiast tour (maybe once a week per demand) that goes into depth about the rich history–much of which could be pulled from the HABS report, which includes the architect's original description of the plans and also condition report in the 1970s with the architectural assessment of value.
- Paranormal tour–this tour could take place after dark and involve the ghost stories linked to the site or allow ghost hunters access at a high premium.
- Seasonal activities–the site would be likely to draw huge numbers in September and October if the site engaged in "haunted house" type activities. For instance, the Winchester Mystery House uses electronic speakers throughout to create a specific auratic atmosphere. While bordering on the delightfully distasteful– flickering lights

and the sound of electricity humming hooked up to a motion detector aimed at the site of the electric chair chamber (if Old Smokey cannot be repurchased, then a replica is recommended) would definitely appeal to that audience's sensibilities. The location near the current prison could contribute to the sense of danger for these thrill-seekers.

The surrounding buildings should be purchased and preserved as well. Some could serve as administrative offices. Repurposing the factories for artisans and vendors would be ideal. Taking the chair factory and reusing it as a space that small business artisan furniture makers or sellers could work and sell from would be true to its original use. The farmland is still there and could have a wide range of use either as event space or even as a working farm or berry picking area. Like Brushy Mountain, I think a distillery or brewery and taproom could be a great way to draw additional visitors and income. The scale of the buildings and vast area of the site could accommodate a variety of ventures.

The Tennessee State Prison has an enormous wealth of historical value. The structures are architecturally priceless, and the stories of the people who lived and worked there are significant. There are endless possibilities for interpreting this site. The ongoing neglect of this site is downright *criminal*.

Chapter Seven

Danvers State Hospital

Danvers State Hospital[134]
Danvers, Massachusetts
Built: 1874-1878
National Register of Historic Places: January 26, 1984
Gothic Revival Institution

Figure 28. "1878 engraving of the State Lunatic Hospital," Danvers Archival Center at the Peabody Institute Library.

[134] The original 1878 name of the institution was "State Lunatic Hospital at Danvers." In 1898, it was renamed "Danvers Insane Hospital." And renamed again in 1909 as the "Danvers State Hospital," which is now it is commonly known today, and I will be referring to it here. The main resource for this section is *DanversInsaneAsylum.com*, which has repositories of historic images, maps, employee interviews, patient abuse reports, patient artwork, timelines, and an archive of the remaining paperwork that was recovered before the hospital's destruction.

The Building

The Victorian era was bursting forth with new movements- women's rights, suffrage, and abolitionism, along with industrial and medical practices reformations. Dr. Thomas Kirkbride's[135] plan for sanitariums was meant to remedy the current ills of treating mental patients like prisoners. His architectural plans were long, stretching narrow buildings widely spaced out. There were airy structures with good ventilation, full of sunlight, including gardens and grounds for patients to get exercise, fresh air, and enjoy the outdoors. Architect Louis Sullivan would have been proud, for in the Kirkbride plans, form followed function as Sullivan advocated. The surgical theater located at the top of one of the menacing towers had 360 windows to let in as much light as possible into the sterile white, gloved-and-gowned space.

Figure 29. Surgical theater located at the top of a tower with 360-degree windows for lighting, DSH archive.

[135] The first and equally notable mental hospital designed by Kirkbride was the Trans Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in Weston, West Virginia, which the Danvers State Hospital was modeled after.

Figure 30. Danvers State Hospital in the 1880s, gardens and staff, DSH archive.

Boston architect Nathaniel Jeremiah Bradlee adapted the Kirkbride plan for the 500-acre campus in Hathorne, Massachusetts. His other notable works are the First Church of Jamaica Plain in 1854 and Boston Young Men's Christian Union in 1876–both also National Register of Historic Places sites built in the Gothic Style. No doubt that the Gothic Revival style was meant to lend these institutions a sense of grandeur. Much like in the case of the Tennessee State Prison, the association with the medieval castles soon became later gruesomely appropriate as medical experimentation on the level of medieval torture became common.

The Patients

The building was constructed to accommodate about 250 patients with an upward maximum of 500. However, simultaneously with these new medical ideas, the definition of lunacy greatly expanded. In addition to currently recognized mental illnesses like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, people could be institutionalized for all manner of causes listed on an 1878 admissions census. They included deranged menstruation, religion, over-study, masturbation, menopausis [sic], connected with the affections, and not insane.[136]

Figure 31. Bed rest was a frequent treatment plan, many patients spending their days and nights confined to bed, DSH archive.

[136] Danvers State Hospital Archive, "Admissions from Causes 1878 State Lunatic Hospital at Danvers." Not listed on this form, but a prevalent reason for admittance was homosexuality (which remained listed as a mental illness in the DSM until 1973).

The result was an explosion in the number of individuals institutionalized in there. By 1912, the Danvers patient population was 1,200; it peaked from the 1920s to the 1940s with over 2,000 and remained as high as 830 in 1976. The original staff was only a dozen doctors, nurses, and staff. In 1943, the night staff was only nine people who were responsible for 2,300 individuals. With the influx of patients and a decrease in state funding, conditions at the hospital rapidly deteriorated. Those kept there were "sick, filthy, and it was not uncommon for someone to die unnoticed, only to be found days later."[137] The staff used straight jackets, isolation, hydrotherapy, electroshock therapy, and physical abuse to manage the overcrowded sanitarium. That is–until a new, more horrific method for control was developed.

The Horror

During this period, Dr. Walter Freeman pioneered the transorbital lobotomy (or, as it is colloquially known, the "icepick lobotomy" for the name of the implement originally used). Doctors performed the procedure by inserting a metal pick into the corner of the eye socket, using a mallet to force it through the thin bone, and scrambling the prefrontal cortex of the brain until the desired results were achieved.[138]

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[137] Aaron Mahnke, *The World of Lore: Dreadful Places* (New York: Del Rey, 2018), 74.

[138] Danvers State Hospital archives, "Certified Beds in Massachusetts Psychiatric Facilities, November 1976;" "$15,000 Blaze in Insane Asylum," *New York Times,* January 25, 1912.

Figure 32. Dr. Walter Freeman performing a transorbital lobotomy as a crowd looks on, National Institute of Health Record November 1, 2019.

Freeman alone performed over 3,500 lobotomies, including 19 on children, the youngest of which was only 4 years old. The surgery had a mortality rate of 15%. One patient died when Freeman stopped to pose for a photo during the procedure, and the surgical instrument penetrated too far into the patient's brain. This procedure was all done without gloves, a mask, or anesthesia. He traveled the United States teaching his method. Lobotomy treatment became a staple at Danvers State Hospital until the 1950s, when drugs were developed that achieved similar effects.

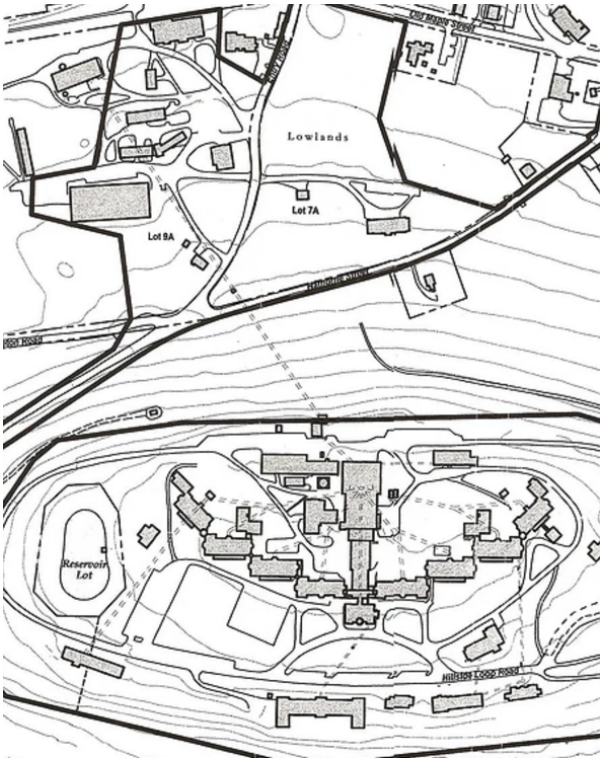

Figure 33. Dashed lines represent the underground tunnel system at Danvers, DSH archive.

One popularly circulated story states that in the 1980s, a string of teenage patients went missing from the hospital. They were believed to be murdered by a staff member utilizing the tunnel system that had been intended for movement during the harsh New England winters.[139] This account can not be verified through archival documents, however this fuels the portion of the story which alleges a cover up by the hospital administrators.

The facility finally closed for good in 1992. The Kirkbride Administration Building was saved from demolition in 2006 through historic preservation efforts and is now the centerpiece of an apartment complex built on the former grounds of Danvers State Hospital. In 2007, a mysterious fire was set, damaging the building. There was no solid evidence, but the only security footage had cut out just before the fire.

[139] Mahnke, *The World of Lore*, 76.

Figure 34. Top: Bradlee Danvers Apartments adaptive reuse of building (apartment website); Middle: Google Earth view c. 2019, the complex is easily spotted from over 10,000-meter view of area due to the identifiable shape; Bottom: 1875 Topographical Sketch showing the grounds and surrounding area, Danvers Stata Hospital archives.

While this property has an unambiguously dark past and would rightfully be counted as a dark tourism site (people still visit even though it is discouraged), the current owners and historians associated with the property have no interest in attracting tourists with that aspect. The contact form for the website has a disclaimer that reads, “Any emails or inquiries asking about tours, visiting the property or the paranormal get automatically deleted. Any other questions or inquiries are welcome.” The only other part of the complex that remains is the patient cemetery. A marker at the entrance reads, “The Echos They Left Behind.”

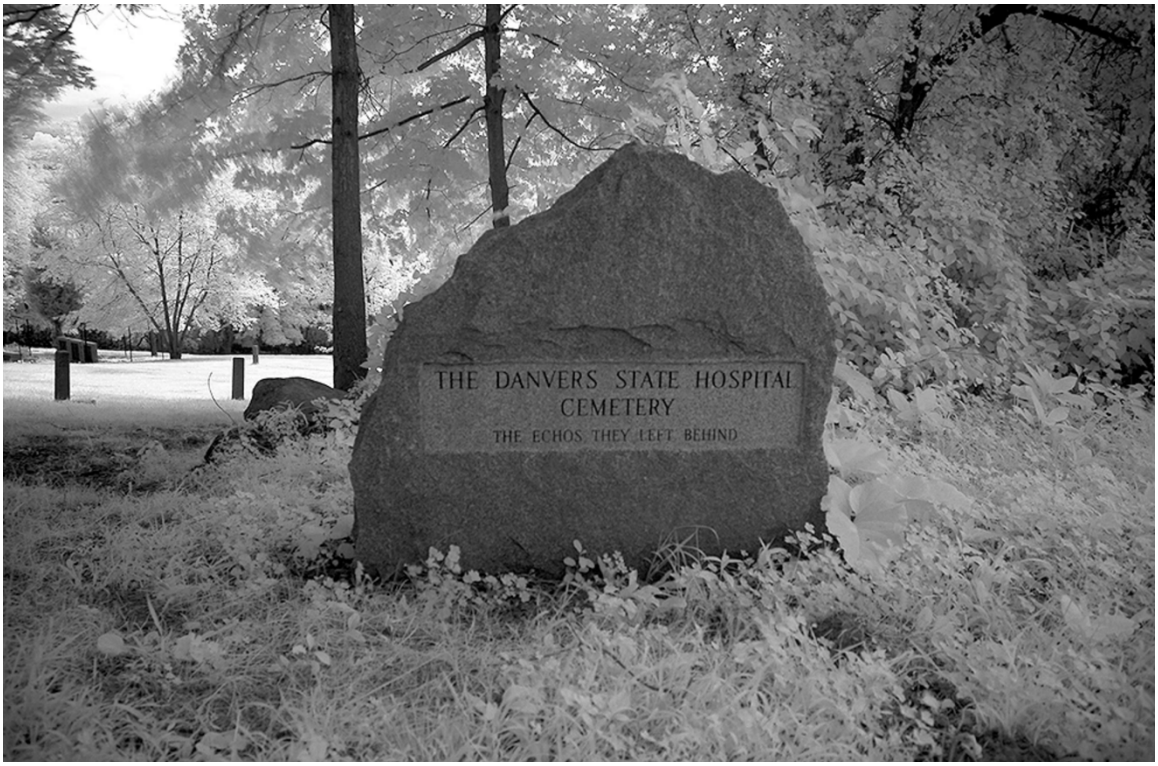

Figure 35. Marker reading, "THE DANVERS STATE HOSPITAL CEMETERY: THE ECHOS THEY LEFT BEHIND," Danvers Stata Hospital archives.

The Lore

Other echoes of Danvers remain in our popular culture. H.P. Lovecraft's "Arkham Sanitarium" from *The Thing on the Doorstep* (a short story published in 1937) was inspired by the Danvers State Hospital, which in turn was the inspiration for "Arkham Asylum" first created by *Batman* comic book writer and editor Dennis O'Neil in 1974. The fictional director Jeremiah Arkham states in the introductory comic, "Arkham Asylum is not just any institution for the criminally insane. It's the Ivy League of insanity."

Figure 36. Film still from Suicide Squad (2016) showing the fictional Arkham Asylum which bears many of the same architectural features as Danvers State Hospital.

Lore, an award-winning, critically-acclaimed podcast that exposes the darker side of history and is hosted by Aaron Mahnke, has devoted two episodes (6 and 60) to aspects of the Danvers State Hospital. Some films and television shows which use of the horror setting of the Victorian insane asylum are *Mouth of Madness* and *American*

Horror Story Season 2 “Asylum.” The book *Project 17* and film *Session 9* (2001) were set at Danvers, and *Home Before Dark* (1958) was filmed at the asylum. The hospital has made appearances in several video games as well.

The archives offer the opportunity to virtually explore the hospital’s history., Judging from the many blog posts, photos, and videos, many tourists still visit the remaining structure Despite the current owners’ objections. Even though the vast majority of the complex has been demolished, Danvers State Hospital firmly survives in our collective nightmares.

Figure 37. 1880s photo of Danvers State Hospital attendants with patient peering out of a window in the background, Danvers Stata Hospital archive.

Chapter Eight

Winchester Mystery House

Winchester Mystery House
San Jose, California
Built: 1884-1922
National Register of Historic Places: August 7, 1974
Victorian and Gothic Revival Vernacular

Figure 38. Winchester Mystery House, photo by author. “Door to nowhere” visible at center.

The Winchester Repeating Rifle, famously known as the “gun that won the West,” was as profitable as it was deadly. After her father-in-law and husband died in 1880 and 1881, Sarah Winchester inherited a fortune of 20 million dollars, plus nearly 50% of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company stock—which, in turn, earned her

roughly $1,000 dollars per day in royalties for the rest of her life. In 2020, that would be a lump sum of about $544,037,258 and a daily income of $27,201.

Sarah felt the weight of the grim source of her wealth acutely. She was an avid practitioner of the Occultist movement that took place during the Victorian era. While still living in Boston, she consulted a psychic medium that told her those who died by the Winchester rifle would curse her family. The only remedy was "that she might escape the curse by moving west and building a house. As long as the building continued, the vengeful spirits would be thwarted and Sarah would live."[140]

Figure 39. Historic photograph of the Winchester House with the seven-story tower intact prior to the 1906 earthquake. Vintage postcard Winchester Mystery House website.

140 Antoinette May, *Haunted Houses of California: A Ghostly Guide to Haunted Houses & Wandering Spirits* (San Carlos, CA: World Wide Publishing, 1990), 156-168.

Sarah Winchester moved to San Jose, California, and bought an eight-room farmhouse surrounded by an orchard. She immediately commissioned artisans to begin the nonstop, daily work.[141] The resulting 38 years of construction created Llanada Villa,[142] one of the most remarkably unique homes ever built. In addition to the 24,000-square foot main house, the estate included a carriage house, foreman's house, fruit drying shed (plums were grown on the estate), tank house, pump house, greenhouse, aviary, four decorative statue fountains, and gardener's tool shed. The buildings were surrounded by a gated entrance and driveway with formal gardens in front of the house and herb, vegetable, and flower gardens along the paths in the back of the house where the work buildings resided. The grounds and outer buildings are maintained in much the way they were during Sarah Winchester's life.

Due to her extreme wealth, Winchester had Llanada Villa outfitted with technologies and conveniences rarely found in Victorian homes, including steam and forced-air heating (in addition to the 17 chimneys), three elevators, extensive modern indoor plumbing with a hot shower, and push-button gaslighting. The foundation is a

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141 The Winchester Mystery House does a brilliant job of emulating the soundscape during their tours. Classical music from the late nineteenth century plays in the courtyard and inside the home recordings of carpentry play in the background in various spots in the house to show what the house would have sounded like day and night for 38 years. Biographer Mary Jo Ignoffo disputed this claim, but it is an oft-repeated part of the lore of the home.

142 This name came from Sarah Winchester. The following owners opened it up to the public in 1923 and after Harry Houdini referred to it as the "Mystery House" it was renamed the Winchester Mystery House.

Figure 40. Winchester house after 1906 earthquake, Winchester Mystery House website.

floating raft system that saved the house from total destruction in the earthquake of 1906 in San Francisco, which toppled a seven-story tower that once stood in the courtyard, and the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquakes.

Sarah's belief in the occult and mysticism was incorporated into the strange Queen Anne-style home. A massive undertaking with no master plan, the house is a labyrinthine maze that twists, turns, and goes between stories without distinction. The number thirteen was thought to be significant, so many of the windows had thirteen panes, staircases with thirteen stairs, thirteen palm trees along the driveway, or alternatively, multiples of thirteen frequented the ornate custom glasswork and wood designs. While the tour attributes some of the windows to Louis Tiffany himself, recently discovered documents revealed that the Pacific American Decorative Company designed many of the windows for the house. One that was never installed and remains in storage in the home would be worth upwards of $375,000 today.[143]

[143] Katie Dowd, "An envelope, hidden in a wall for 100 years, helps solve a Winchester Mystery House riddle," *SFGATE*, September 16, 2019.

Figure 41. Winchester house ballroom, photo by author.

Other oddities designed to confuse or trap ghosts included a winding staircase that abruptly stops at a ceiling, a second-floor exterior door that leads nowhere, or rooms that were constructed and then closed up without a door. One such room was eventually opened and found to simply have a couch and porcelain doll. One of the 160 rooms was devoted to the séances hosted there, where Sarah claimed to receive instructions on what and how to build. The film *Winchester* depicts her using "automatic drawing," a method by which occultists believed spirits would guide the hand to communicate. One of the turrets' interior spaces was designed so that the circular walls and arched ceiling act as an acoustic mirror to create a sort of whispering gallery. Instead of the traditional design where even a whisper from one point in the room may be heard in another (like the Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol); this room is constructed in such a way that if a person stands in the exact center and speaks, even at a whisper, their voice reverberates and is amplified in an eerie, layered manner which can only be experienced where they are standing. The intent was to better be able to hear the voices of the dead.

Figure 42. Staircase to nowhere with mirror to allow tours to see the abrupt ending without entering the stairs, photo by author.

Sarah's behavior was as eccentric as the home. She never slept in the same bedroom two nights in a row, and the front door was never to be used. It wasn't until the Winchester Mystery House added the "Explore More Tour" in 2016 that the $3,000 glass doors were opened.[144] This tour requires hard hats and showcases portions of the home that were damaged in the 1906 earthquake and areas still under construction when Sarah Winchester died September 5, 1922, and the work finally stopped, the carpenters famously laying down their hammers with nails not yet hammered in.

Figure 43. "Explore More Tour," photo by author.

The restoration efforts began in 1973 and have continued to the present. The irony of work going on for the past 46 years in addition to the first 38 is not slight. Today the house is a museum open to the public for tours, weddings, private parties, and events. They offer a Winchester Rifle museum and a museum of Victorian-era objects near the gift shop.

[144] This is the claim made, and perhaps it was true during Sarah Winchester's life, but the author finds it implausible.

The house-museum has embraced its spooky reputation. They capitalize on it with "Flashlight Tours" every Friday the 13th, a day they also ring the bell in the old bell tower 13 times at 1300 hours in tribute to Sarah Winchester's obsession with the number. Additionally, they offer "Candlelight Tours" at night, where guests travel through the mansion with only the light of a single candle to guide them.[145]

The home is now owned by Winchester Mystery House, LLC, a private company which operates the property as a house museum tourist attraction. According to the Dun & Bradstreet Business Directory, the company has an annual revenue of $8.5 million.[146] The property is meticulously maintained, cleaned, and the multitude of artifacts are well preserved. The interpretation comingles verifiable history and legend. Historian Mary Jo Ignoffo challenges many of the generally accepted and oft repeated claims in her 2012 biography of Sarah Winchester entitled, *Captive of the Labyrinth: Sarah L. Winchester, Heiress to the Rifle Fortune.*[147] This property is a prime example of how dark tourism sites can be properly preserved and profitable. The non-profit historic preservation community would do well to take note of the value and draw of dark tourism, so these places can be preserved and the truth can be told, alongside and differentiated from the legends.

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[145] *Winchester Mystery House* website and marketing materials, winchestermysteryhouse.com.

[146] Dun & Bradstreet Business Directory, https://www.dnb.com/business-directory/company-profiles.winchester_mystery_house_llc.f1861badf1b2f74a30955167327249b4.html#financials-anchor

[147] Mary Jo Ignoffo, *Captive of the Labyrinth: Sarah L. Winchester, Heiress to the Rifle Fortune* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012)

Chapter Nine

Bell Witch of Adams, Tennessee

Bell Witch Cabin and Bell Witch Cave
Adams, Tennessee
Built: 1874-1878
National Register of Historic Places: (Bell Witch Cave only) January 26, 1984
Colonial Frontier and Wilderness

Figure 44. Historic etching depicting the poisoning of John Bell by the Bell Witch.

The Legend

The story of the Bell Witch[148] spread across the western hemisphere in the 1800s, but the legend persists in folklore and film today. In 1804, John and Lucy Bell, their nine children, and an unknown number of enslaved workers moved to the Red River Valley in Tennessee and built an "I" house log cabin and at least one slave dwelling with a 1,000-acre farm.

The Bell family's troubles[149] started in 1817 when John Bell was out in his fields and shot at a black dog-like creature, soon after two of the Bell children reported seeing strange creatures. Soon after the Bells heard disturbances at night, often in the form of banging on their cabin walls, chains dragging, the sounds of strangling, or scratching sounds on their bedposts–all sources undiscoverable when investigated–and in one instance stones falling from the

Figure 45. Historic etching depicting Dean, an enslaved worker, with a two-headed black dog, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

[148] Nick Moretti, ed., *The Bell Witch Anthology* (Lexington, KY: 2006); "Bell Witch." Tennessee State Library and Archives exhibit Tennessee Myths and Legends.; Bell Witch Cabin and Cave. Adams, Tennessee. Two guided tours and staff interviews. October 5, 2019. Participant observation and interviews by author.

[149] Using all of these resources, I will be stating the account as given, but it is not a confirmation of belief in the supernatural.

ceiling inside of their cabin. Soon, the spirit took to tormenting their daughter Betsy–striking her, pulling her hair, pulling her out of bed, or removing her covers at night.

Eventually, the spirit began speaking to the Bells. She spoke with the voice of a woman and was kind to Lucy Bell while tormenting John and Betsy Bell–who she later harassed until she changed her choice of prospective husband. She also harassed the enslaved workers, particularly one named Dean. The Bell Witch was very racist toward African Americans, even by the standards of the time.

When the voice was questioned about who or what she was, she said, "I am a Spirit; I once was very happy, but I have been disturbed and made unhappy. I am the Spirit of a person who was buried in the woods nearby and the grave was disturbed, my bones disinterred and scattered, and one of my teeth was lost under this house. I am here looking for that tooth."[150] The voice taunted them while they took apart the floorboards to find the tooth. Later, she claimed to be, "a Spirit from everywhere, Heaven, Hell, the earth; am in the air, the houses, any place at any time; have been created millions of years."[151] At one point, she manifested as four voices. Declaring themselves to be called Blackdog, Mathematics, Cypocryphy, and Jerusalem–each voice

[150] Moretti, *The Bell Witch Anthology,* 26.
[151] Ibid., 114.

was distinct from the original voice of Kate, but soon it was just Kate again. Kate was the name the Bells used to refer to the "witch."[152]

"Witch" in the 1800s wasn't the traditional idea of a woman who had made a pact with the devil, but rather could be used to describe a spirit that was believed to do someone's bidding, like a golem. The Red River Baptist church minutes show a quarrelsome relationship that John Bell had with Kate Batt's husband. Kate Batts was known as a boisterous woman that "believed herself above her station," often handling the business affairs due to her husband's ill health.[153] It doesn't take much stretching to imagine why she might have taken the blame for conjuring a witch. Thus, the spirit went from being called "Kate Batt's witch" to simply "Kate."

As it turned out, Kate was quite the conversationalist. She reportedly repeated two sermons that happened simultaneously dozens of miles apart word-for-word. She regularly conversed with the Bell family and their great many visitors who traveled to witness the haunting of the Bell Witch–skeptics, supernaturalists, religious leaders, and curious people from near and far–purportedly including President Andrew Jackson.

Eventually, Kate escalated her torment of John Bell before finally poisoning and killing him. There were prophecies that she would return, but after the death of John

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[152] Ibid., 33.

[153] *Minutes of the Red River Baptist Church, 1791-1826, Robertson County,* Tennessee (Transcribed by Mary Holland Lancaster. Greenville, SC: A Press).

Bell, the haunting settled down for some time. She later purportedly returned to deliver strange and extensive prognostications to John Bell Jr.

Horror of Isolation in Film

During the early nineteenth century, Robertson County had a population of about 10,000.[154] In the American frontier, churches were at the center of community life. The group of men that presided over the church was held significant authority in the community. John Bell was an Elder of Red River Baptist Church. Historian David Britton compares mania surrounding the Bell Witch to a second wave of the Salem Witch Trials panic sweeping in the South.[155]

Figure 46. Red River Baptist Church. Left: As it appears today, photo by author.; Right: Depiction in An American Haunting.

[154] Albert Virgil Goodpasture, Goodspeed History of Tennessee – Robertson County, 1886, p. 836.
[155] *Astonishing Legends*, "Episode 85: The Bell Witch Part 1" and "Episode 86: the Bell Witch Part 2." Podcast by Scott Philbrook & Forrest Burgess, (October 2017).

The wilderness and isolation from the rest of mankind instilled a special sort of fear in the pioneers. Historian Richard Trask suggests that the heightened state of fear from the elements, strange creatures, and Native Americans left those living on the frontier in a state of mind vulnerable to panic and susceptible to believing in supernatural threats. For a group of highly religious Christians, the wilderness was where the Devil tempted Christ. They associated the Native Americans with evil.[156] When they settled into the hunting grounds of the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickamauga groups, conflict was a constant threat. Isolation, a house out alone in the wilderness, added an element of horror to life on the colonial frontier.

Figure 47. *An American Haunting*, film still.

An American Haunting, a film based on the accounts of the Bell Witch haunting, attributed the supernatural phenomena to a psychic manifestation of the trauma that was caused to Betsy Bell by sexual abuse at the hands of John Bell. This interpretation

[156]*Unobscured*, "Season 1, Interview 3: Richard Trask," Podcast by Aaron Mahnke, (2018).

was unique and controversial. The family that now owns the "Bell Witch Cabin and Cave" adamantly denied that John Bell was a child rapist. However, one fact not often mentioned lends credibility to their theory–John and Lucy were married when he was 32, and she was only 12 years old. This rendition represents a different sort of evil that comes from isolation.

Figure 48. Bell Witch Festival, Adams, TN. Tobacco Wars storytelling, photo by author.

Current Interpretation

The legend of the Bell Witch is still told in Adams, Tennessee, and the surrounding areas. Adams celebrates the Bell Witch Festival every October (dark tourism's prime season), and the site gives specialized tours for that month. The festival has run for seventeen years, drawing thousands of visitors, and features a theatrical rendition of the story of the "troubles," a dramatic rendition of the Tobacco Wars, and music.

Figure 49. Dramatic reenactment of the Bell Witch Haunting at the Bell Witch Festival, photo by author.

During my visit, when there were electrical problems, the local presiding over the festivities addressed "Kate" directly from on stage. This destination is among the oldest dark tourism sites in Tennessee. The only remaining structure built by the Bells, a log cabin that wasn't part of their residence, has been moved to the site where the festival is held along with other period buildings to form a small outdoor museum.

Figure 50. Bell Witch gift shop. Above: "historic document" which has been reproduced, laminated, and stapled to a wall.; Below: shelf of “haunted” dolls for sale. Photos by author.

Since the Bell farm changed hands in 1993, the owners have operated it as a tourist attraction. Although interesting in its own way, it is a glaring example of a historic site done badly. The visitor’s center is posted ceiling-to-floor with “historical” documents. Along with old-fashioned soaps, there is a shelf full of dolls that have been painted with dark circles under their eyes to appear haunted for sale. One counter is pasted with the letters of people returning small objects they took from the site because they believed they have been cursed by Kate herself and befallen maladies since their visit. Visitors returning small, purloined souvenirs is commonly reported by National Park Service workers at sites associated with commonly held superstitions attached.

Figure 51. Clockwise: reconstructed cabin loft, reconstructed main room including non-contemporary materials, mannequin of John Bell, and the incorporation of new materials, photos by author.

The “Bell Cabin” is a reconstructed saddlebag cabin set on piers that was moved from elsewhere and an outhouse attached to the back by a porch–the original Bell house was an “I” house. The reconstruction is a hodgepodge of the remains of a cabin from the 1800s and new materials. Recordings play in each room, telling the story of the Bell Witch haunting. There is little to no site interpretation, and no historical information offered, with the exception of a genealogy display and a few historic images posted on one of the walls.

Figure 52. Top: historic photo of the Bell home, an “I” house, 1909, located in genealogy room; Bottom: “Bell Cabin” reconstruction, a Saddlebag style home, photo by author.

The cave on the property is a National Register of Historic Places site, even though it was only loosely associated with a minor instance of the haunting where Kate was said to save a boy from drowning. During the tour, the current owners claimed that the former owners had found the bones of a Native American in the cave and discarded them in a shed, which were later thrown away by the sheriff's department after determining that they were not evidence of a recent homicide. The lack of respect for the cave itself is as egregious as the treatment of the bones. The most basic precautions of ensuring the preservation of the cave and wildlife are not met.

Figure 53. Left: ransacked alleged Native American burial site; Right: "Witch Rock" formation in the Bell Witch Cave, photos by author.

The current owners seem to have found success as a dark tourism roadside attraction. When the tour guide/owner asked the visitors for a show of hands, "Who believes in ghosts?" Almost every individual there raised his or her hand. The day I visited, a group of four were wearing "Cryptid Studies Institute" t-shirts. They host a podcast exploring the paranormal and were visiting the site for part of their research.

Figure 54. Bell Witch Cave tourists, photo by author.


Figure 55. Farmland surrounding the Bell Witch tourist attraction, photo by author.

One aspect that is well preserved is the sense of isolation. The small town of Adams, Tennessee, had only 666 people living there during the last census in 2017.[157] Driving to Adams means passing miles of fields and forests. The property with the "Bell Cabin" and Bell Witch Cave is still surrounded by several acres of farmland. The only things that mar the viewshed are the visitor center, the house where the owners live (a modern ranch-style home), and the gravel parking lot.

Figure 56. Barn Quilt in Adams, TN, photo by author.

[157] United State Census Bureau.

Chapter Ten

The Stanley Hotel

The Stanley Hotel
Estes Park, Colorado
Primary construction: 1907–1912, Major explosion 1911
Stephen King's The Shining book conception 1974 and film release 1980
National Register of Historic Places dates: 1977, 1985, 1998
Georgian Revival

Figure 57. Left: Film still from *The Shining*, 1980.; Right: The Stanley Hotel (original building), hotel website.

Inventor of the Stanley Steamer automobile and photographic dry plate, entrepreneur and architect Freelan Oscar Stanley began in 1907 to build the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado. When construction was completed in 1912, he had built

12 Georgian Revival buildings as part of a larger resort located adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park north of Denver.

The hotel was a marvel of the time. Stanley constructed a fleet of vehicles to bring guests up the mountain, and the hotel was outfitted to run entirely on electricity, with a supplemental auxiliary acetylene lighting system since the electrical grid was not reliable in the area. This addition would prove dangerous when on June 25, 1911, the day after the pipes had been filled, a gas explosion rocked the hotel, injuring eight people and destroying several rooms. There were no reported deaths, but one popular ghost story claims the hotel maid who came to light the gas lights was killed in the explosion and haunts the room where she died. In reality, the maid was injured, but lived and continued to work at the hotel until she died of natural causes many years later.[158]

The resort played host to the wealthy and tuberculosis patients seeking the believed healing properties of mountain air. Among the notable guests were composer John Phillips Sousa, the "Unsinkable" Molly Brown, and President Theodore Roosevelt. However, one guest created a new distinction for the hotel. On October 30, 1974, horror author Stephen King and his wife checked in as the only guests when the hotel

[158] "Stanley Hotel Will Not Close: explosion of Sunday night less serious than reported. Damage $10,000." *The Fort Collins Express*. Fort Collins, Colorado. June 29, 1911.

was shutting down for the winter. After dinner with his wife in a grand empty dining room, he spent a sleepless night roaming the halls of the Stanley Hotel and visiting an nearly empty bar—a midnight stroll that formed the groundwork for his novel, *The Shining*.

Similar to the setting of the Bell Witch, isolation breeds fear. The story of both the novel and film version *The Shining* by Stanley Kubrick utilizes the main horror element of isolation and being surrounded by wilderness. The danger people face when removed from social safety nets in inhospitable environments and the potential madness extreme isolation can breed are reflected in and a result of the setting. As the fictionalized version of the Stanley, the grand Overlook Hotel, shutters for the season, the Torrence family is trapped due to the impassable conditions and the character Jack Torrence becomes withdrawn and violent as the hotel's ghosts draw him in. For all of the supernatural and psychological horror elements present in the story, it is the harsh Colorado winter that ultimately kills Jack.

While the Stanley Hotel was the inspiration for King's novel, the film adaptation used Glacier National Park and the Timberline Lodge on Mount Hood in Oregon as the exteriors of the hotel and surroundings. The interiors were built on a soundstage at Elstree Studios in England and partially based on the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park in California. *The Shining*'s The Colorado Lounge (novel) and The Gold Room (film) fictional bars were modeled after the real Stanley Hotel Whiskey Bar and were particularly memorable settings in the book and film. This iconic setting has been

referenced the films *Ghost Ship* (2002), *Hold Up Down* (2005) and *Passengers* (2016); in television shows such as *Supernatural* (2007), *Bob's Burgers* (2011), and *The Simpsons* (2018, 2019); and the video games *Heavy Rain* (2010) and *inFamous 2* (2011).

Figure 58. Stanley Hotel Whiskey Bar, an iconic setting replicated in *The Shining*, Stanley Hotel website.

The hotel has capitalized on the popularity brought by spooky associations. In 2015, the hotel created a hedge maze on the grounds as an homage to the harrowing climax of the film *The Shining*. Hotel guests and staff have long reported paranormal activity, including seeing Stanley himself and a maid that had been critically injured, both of whom lived at the hotel until dying of old age. Room 217 where King stayed and the "spirited" rooms on the fourth floor can both be rented at a premium. These units

typically cost 50% more than the comparably sized rooms. The hotel offers two tours. The daytime “Explore and Learn” tour covers the history of the hotel, the Stanley’s, notable guests, and architectural interests. The more expensive “Stanley Hotel Folklore Night Tour” explores the 4th floor and outer edges of the hotel while recounting the supernatural folklore of the hotel. The Stanley Hotel ownership capitalizes on the dark tourism opportunities, while pairing those experiences with historical interpretation offerings. In doing so, they strike balance few dark tourism destinations achieve.

Chapter Eleven

Popular Culture, Dark Tourism Visitors, and New Orleans

"What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but what happens in New Orleans goes home with you." – Laurell K. Hamilton

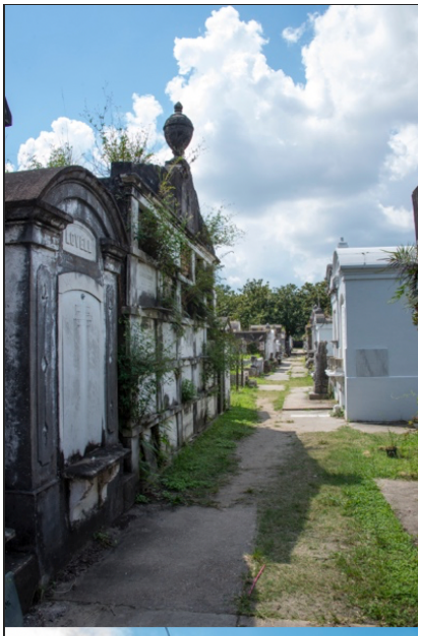
If vampires were real, where would they live in America? Thanks to Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* and Charlaine Harris' *Southern Vampire* series (the basis for the *True Blood* television show), most people would guess New Orleans, though New York City and Forks, Washington would be popular answers as well. The setting of a story gives as much life to a fictional work as the main characters.

Figure 59. Facebook post showing film stills from *Interview with a Vampire* overlayed on images of the actual settings.

New Orleans serves as a fictional or real setting in over a thousand works of literature, televisions shows, and movies. *Coven*, the third season of the televisions series *American Horror Story,* takes place in New Orleans and has reignited interest in some historic locations that are given new life in the show.

Figure 60. Buckner Mansion, 1410 Jackson Avenue, New Orleans Garden district.

Henry Sullivan Buckner and his vast cotton fortune paid for the Buckner Mansion, built utilizing slave labor in 1856. For a period, it served as Soule College, one of the first business schools in the South. The antebellum mansion is purportedly "haunted" and can be rented for $4,000 a night. While it has long been a crowning architectural gem of the Garden District, the home became wildly popular after it was featured as "Miss Robichaux's Academy for Exceptional Young Ladies" In *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013). The same can be said of the nearby Lafayette Cemetery No 1, which was also portrayed.



The historical figures Marie Laveau, known as "The Voodoo Queen," and Madame Delphine LaLaurie, a woman infamous for the grotesque torture of enslaved peoples, were also featured on *American Horror Story: Coven* breathing new life into their mythologies. These larger-than-life characters have been elevated beyond verifiable history through local folklore and dramatization. The locations of their homes are still a popular stop for tours. The LaLaurie mansion was partially destroyed in a fire (purportedly set by an enslaved woman in hopes of escaping), but the 1140 Royal Street structure stands in much the same condition today. Locals believe the building to be both haunted and cursed. No person has lived in the home for more than five years since Delphine LaLaurie. Even though Marie Laveau's cottage was demolished, the site upon which it stood is visited by tour groups and voodoo practitioners alike.

Figure 61. Top: Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 located on Washington Avenue in the Garden district.; Middle: The former location of Marie Laveau's cottage located in the French Quarter. (images by author); Bottom: Historical image of the LaLaurie Mansion located in the French Quarter.

Thus, New Orleans is an excellent subject for economic opportunity tied to dark tourism. The city has a thriving tourism industry, and few places have their cultural identity made up of a mingling of empirical history, folklore, film, curious history, and magical thinking, as does New Orleans, Louisiana. As a personal observation, I have been to few American cities with as high a density of walking tours offered. One can hardly throw a stone in the French Quarter without hitting one tour group or another.

In order for someone to administer tours in New Orleans, the City Ground Transportation Bureau must license them. Applicants must be 18 or older and not been convicted of a felony in the past five years. Additionally, all applicants must "Pass a written test on history and culture of New Orleans with a minimum score of 70%. At the discretion of the Department of Safety and Permits the applicant may be required to have a verbal examination and an interview."[159] A permit is valid for two years, expiring on the applicant's birthday. The initial fee is $50 and $20 for each renewal. Planners and Companies permit holders must additionally reside and maintain an office in Orleans Parish. The permit cost is $500.00 per year for Tour Planners (Category 1) and $1,000.00 per year for Tour Companies (Category 2). They are also required to be insured.

A large portion of New Orleans, Louisiana tours incorporate dark history, folklore, and fiction. To look deeper at the industry, I worked on a study generated and

[159] New Orleans Ground Transportation Bureau, nola.gov/ground-transportation-bureau

administered by McDoux Preservation LLC, a firm based in Houston, TX. For the purpose of this survey, dark history included sites of suffering or death. This includes cemeteries, true crime locations, battlefields, memorials, and locations associated with slavery or genocide.

To identify potential survey participants, I collected a list of tours and guides through searching the City of New Orleans tour license records, the city's tourism website, keyword Google searches, and searching each list I found on the topic.

I compiled a list of 85 apparently active tour guides or companies. I searched individual websites, tour company listings, and Facebook business pages for contact information, but nine tour guides or companies did not have current contact information available or were seemingly inactive and appeared to not hold tours in the last few years. Of the remaining 76, two companies were listed as tours but are static attractions—a haunted house and an animal encounter. I contacted the remaining 74 actual tours, which appeared to be active tours with current contact information, with a request to complete this survey. Of this group of 74, 21 tour representatives responded. 30% of respondents were from tours titled in such a way that the name indicates they have some degree of dark or supernatural content. Almost a quarter of the larger group

solicited had names that indicate the tour includes dark or fantastic content—including words like paranormal, ghosts, spectral, phantoms, Voodoo, etc.

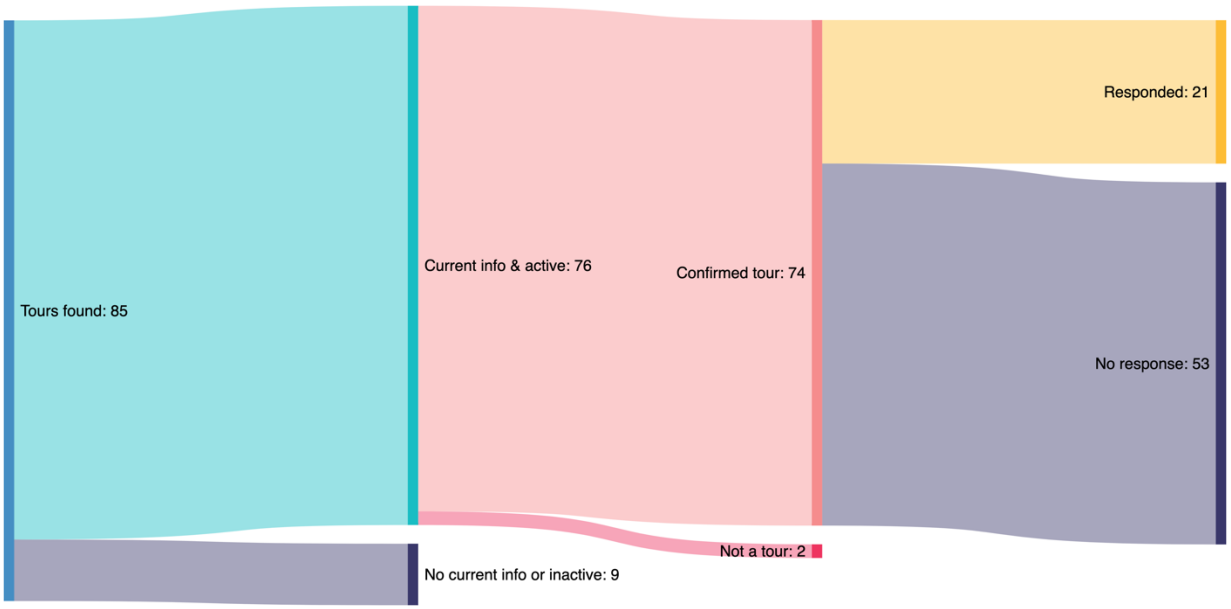


Figure 62. Tour discovery, solicitation, and responsiveness.

There is a great amount of diversity in the types of tours offered, the make up of companies, and content:

- Tours advertising alternative languages tours were scarce: English-only (77.8%), Spanish (11.1%), Creole/French (7.4%), or Hebrew (3.7%).
- Six offered tours under a parent company that offers tours in other cities in the U.S. or internationally (7.1%), while the rest were solely based in New Orleans.

- Three respondents said that they did not originally offer tours with the listed dark history topics but started offering them in 2011, 2013, and 2017 in response to the market demands.

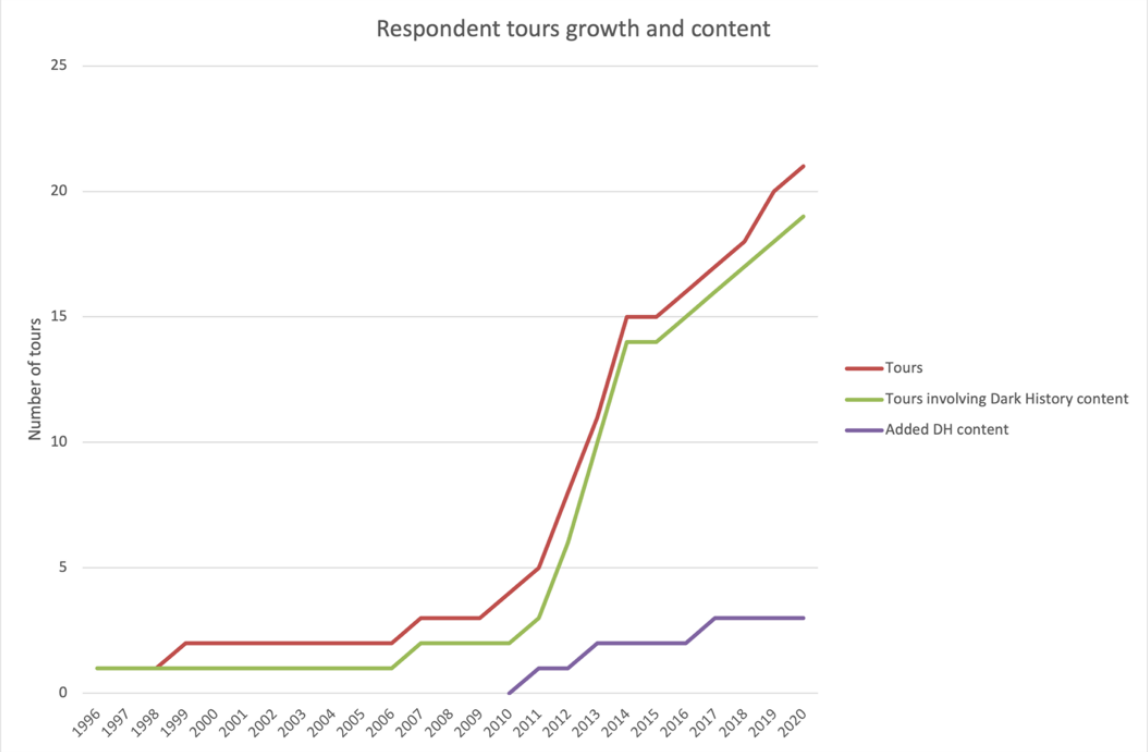


Figure 63. Combines survey questions 2 and 4.

- Almost half of survey respondents said their tours included sites associated with these types of entertainment. One tour company, New Orleans Movie & TV Tours, exclusively focuses on nearly 200 movies and television shows associated with NOLA.

Dark history	28.57%
True crime	38.10%
Cemetery	57.14%
Murder	33.33%
Death	33.33%
Suffering	23.81%
Torture (i.e. Madame LaLaurie)	23.81%
Voodoo, Conjure, or Hoodoo	57.14%
Folklore	33.33%
Ghosts	23.81%
Vampires, Werewolves, any monster or cryptid	19.05%
Sites or stories connected to fiction - literary, television, or film	47.62%
Slavery	66.67%
Plantations	33.33%
Architecture	66.67%
War	33.33%
Political History	47.62%
Black History	47.62%
Women's History	52.38%
Natural Disasters	52.38%

Figure 64. Question 3 Tour Topics responses with exact percentages (graph below).

- Only 28.5% self-identified as including dark history offerings, even though over 90% of respondents indicated the inclusion of some facet of dark tourism content as traditionally defined.
- Likewise, the most puzzling finding of the tour survey responses was that while 66.67% of respondents said their tours included the topic of slavery, but only

47.62% selected Black History as a topic. This indicates that 4 of the tour guides don't view slavery as a part of Black History.

- "Other" answers for question 3 included prostitution content and nature tours.

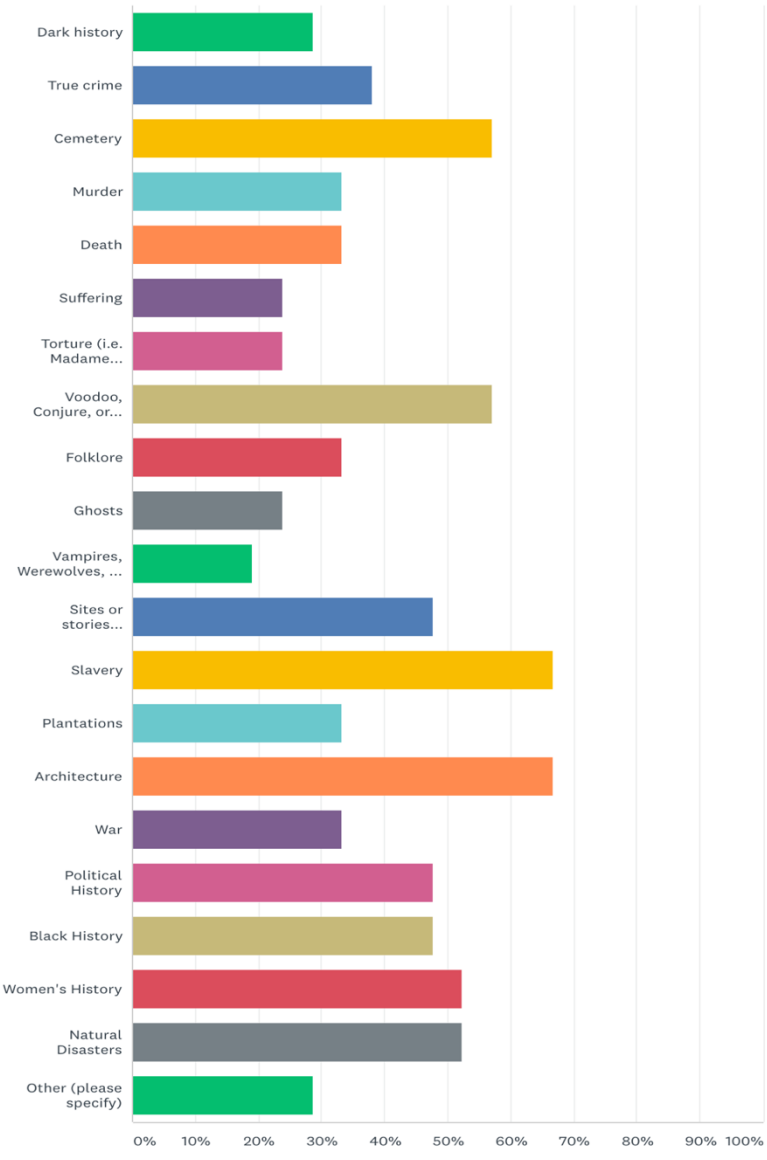


Figure 65. Question 3 responses.

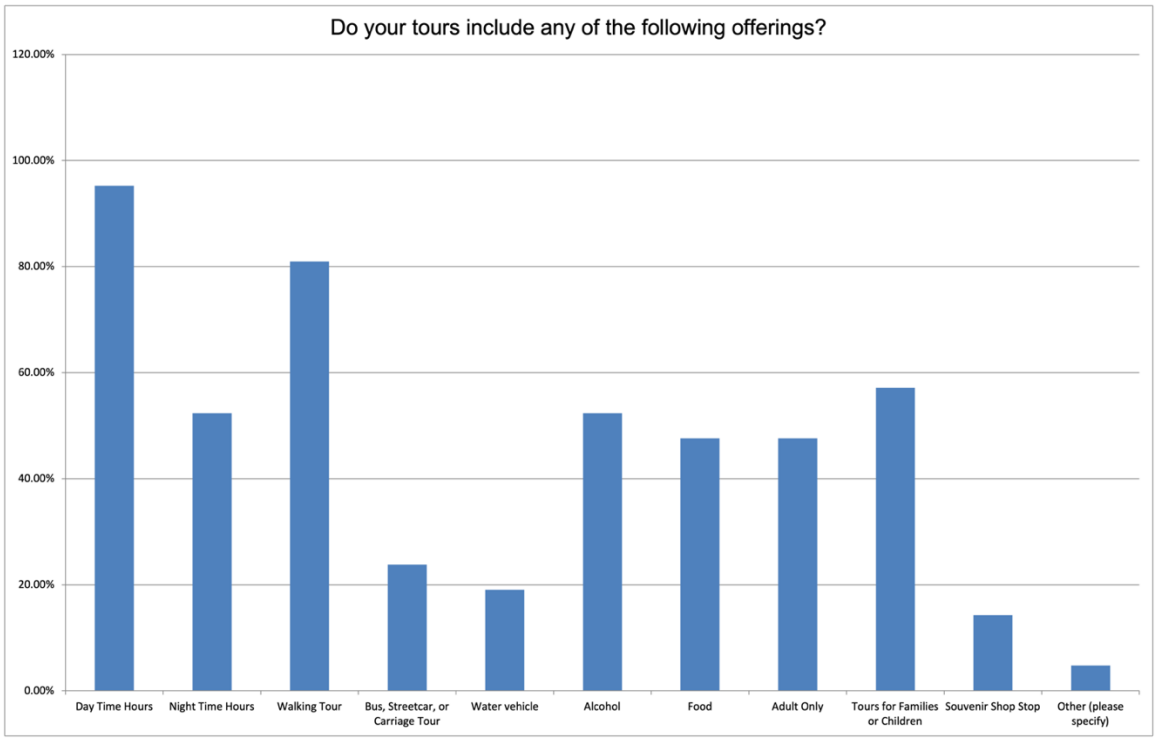


Figure 66. Question 5 Tour Offerings responses.

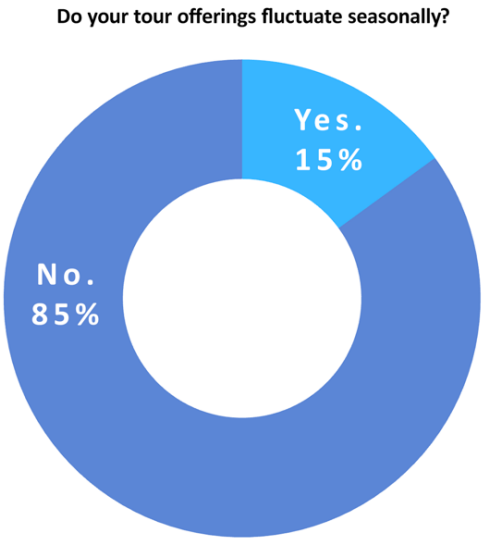


Figure 67. Question 6 responses.

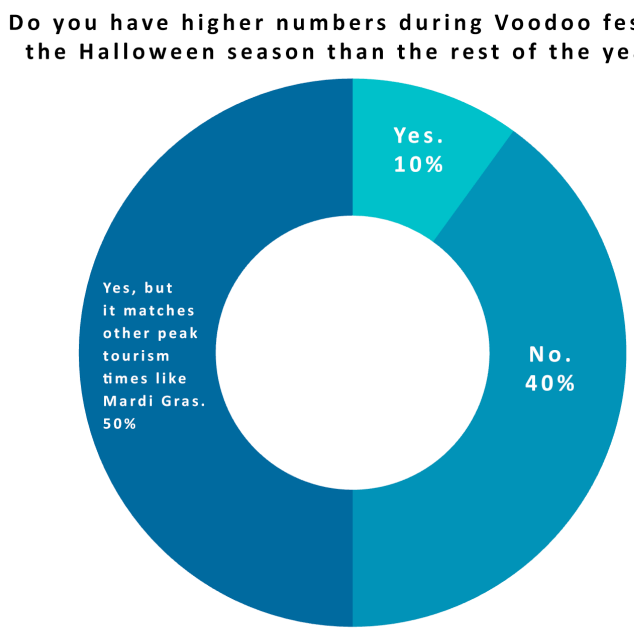


Figure 68. Question 7 responses.

- Of the 17 responding tour companies, the average number of employees is 7, with almost half (47%) having five or fewer employees and less than a quarter (23%) having ten or more.

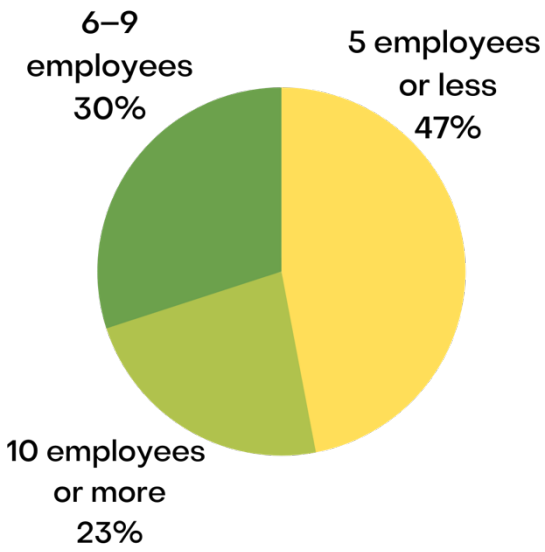


Figure 69. Number of reported employees.

When asked about the number of tourists they see annually, the 18 responding tour companies give an average of 9,300 tours each year. The company sizes were evenly distributed. The smaller companies (33%) gave less than 1,000 tours, the larger companies (33%) gave 10,000 or more tours, and the midsized third stayed in the 1,700–3,500 range. The largest reported number of annual tours was 68,000, and the smallest was 300. Notably, the high-end outlier gives waterway tours to literal boatloads of tourists.

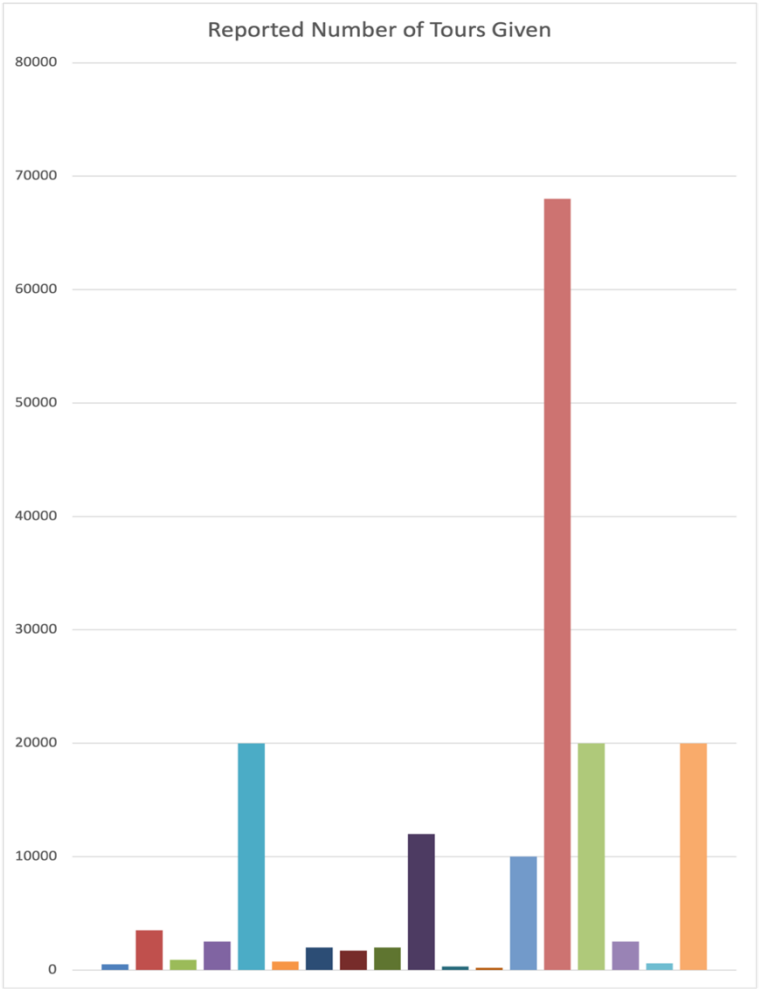


Figure 70. Reported number of tours given annually.

- The most profitable tour from the pool of respondents is a nature-focused aquatic tour that annually yields a reported ~$1.5 million.
- The most lucrative on-the-ground tour of any responding company is a dark-tourism-themed, adult-only walking tour that offers tours day or night covering the broadest spectrum of topics connected to dark tourism- including folklore, fiction, magic, and the paranormal.

New Orleans Tour Industry Growth

On April 12, 2021, I submitted an information request to the City of New Orleans City Attorney's Office. I asked the office to provide a list of the following:

- 2021 valid tour planning companies with city-issued permits
- 2021 valid tour operating companies
- The current number of those with valid tour guide licenses
- The number of permits issued in the earliest year permits were issued or record-keeping began
- The number of permits issued in the year that is the halfway point between 2021 and the earliest year permits were issued or record-keeping began
- Valid tour operating companies the earliest year permits were issued or record-keeping began

The office produced the information . I charted the data which reveals an interesting trend that links industry growth with disasters.

According to the City Attorney's Office, City of New Orleans, Department of Safety and Permits, there are, as of April 2021, 1,167 licensed tour guides in the City of New Orleans, up from 1,088 in 2019 (7% increase in under two years). The dramatic 2005 increase can be logically connected to interest to visit New Orleans directly after hurricane Katrina and likewise the following drop off while the city was rebuilding.

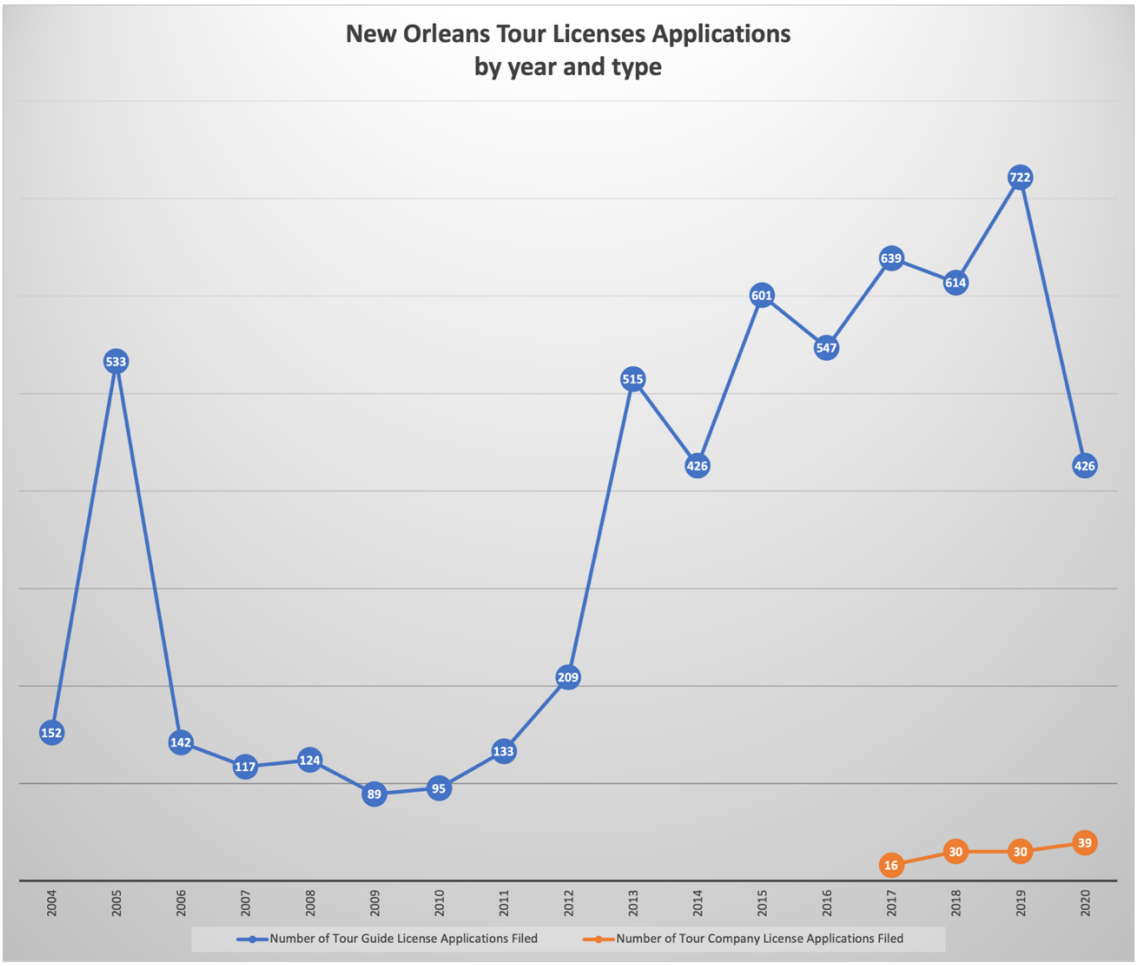


Figure 71. Number of tour guide and tour company licenses applied for 2004–2020.

Disaster Tourism

Hurricane Katrina brought in droves of tourists. There is a marked spike in the applications for tour guide licenses in 2005. The following years while the city was rebuilding, go back to the previous lower numbers and then begin to climb again in 2012, peaking in 2019 and dropping again in 2020, likely due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Isabelle Cossart, owner and operator of Tours by Isabelle, moved to New Orleans from France and began offering tours in 1979. In her 2015 article, "I Was The Face Of Disaster Tourism In Post-Katrina New Orleans," she wrote about her experiences as a tour guide in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the inevitable disaster tourism which followed.[160] Cossart observed:

"In the fall of 2005, the demand for tours showing the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina became impossible to ignore. It was the only thing customers asked for."[161] She experienced accusations of exploitation while also being one of the people that suffered–losing her business, home, and possessions. She spoke of the curious

[160] Isabelle Cossart, "I Was The face Of Disaster Tourism In Post-Katrina New Orleans." *BuzzFeed News*, August 24, 2015. https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/isabellecossart/i-was-the-face-of-disaster-tourism-in-post-katrina-new-orlea

[161] Ibid.

tourists, “It was only human nature, I figured, for people to want to see for themselves what’s happened here. And besides, I desperately needed the work.”[162]

She created a 49-mile tour showcasing accessible disaster sites—lost neighborhoods, failed levees, and breached floodwalls. Cossart chose to try to educate the tourists, not just about what had been, but the situation they were currently in. “I thought I had a responsibility, like a journalist, to tell every visitor the truth of this disaster and its crazy scope, its ugly and unjust consequences in terms of lives lost and property destroyed. I asked customers to ask their lawmakers to hold the Army Corps of Engineers accountable for their mistakes.”[163]

New Orleans Tourism Research Conclusion

New Orleans is a prime example of a culturally rich and tourism-driven economy. The array of different types of tours offered touch on almost all dark tourism topics. Tour guides reject the dark tourism label. You cannot talk about the history, culture, and heritage of New Orleans by examining exclusively empirical data. Heritage, by definition, is something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor. There is no requirement that it be true or based on fact. There must be an allowance for folklore, fiction, magic,

[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.

and the paranormal when taking a broader view of cultural heritage. Dark tourism, including disaster tourism, is an economic opportunity for entrepreneurs and the city.

When I began to reach out to tour guides in New Orleans about the content of their tours, I had many insist that while they included cemetery tours or memorials—they were not dark history tours. By Stone's definition, the ghost tours that take place fall more on the "pale tourism" side of things. For some, even events rooted in the established historical record are marred by the mention of ghosts, but for others, the lore is the lure of New Orleans.

Conclusion

The case studies presented here represent different categories as they relate to dark tourism and the fate of each within the realm of historic preservation. The Danvers State Hospital has been all but destroyed. However, the remaining building is privately owned and an excellent example of adaptive reuse. The site does not capitalize on its dark past. The Tennessee State Prison is another Gothic Revival institutional structure of which only part remains, but the structure has been neglected by the State of Tennessee. Still, it represents an excellent adaptive reuse opportunity. So many of these neglected sites are prime targets for an adaptive reuse model, which has been thoroughly proven a green and sustainable model for development. The Winchester Mystery House is privately owned but operated as a museum utilizing professional historical practices with their research, interpretation, and preservation efforts. The Bell Witch Cabin and Cave represent the kitsch-roadside potential of dark tourism. The "Bell Cabin" is a reconstruction, and the interpretation is more ghost story than actual history. More than anything, the site serves as a historic preservation tale of caution. Lastly, the Stanley Hotel owners have capitalized on its relationship to fiction and tangential dark tourism opportunity while also sharing the architectural and non-spooky portions of its past.

It is imperative for historic preservationists to reframe the current conception of cultural identity in order to better preserve the widest breadth of cultural resources. Outside of cemeteries, which are a historic preservation staple, there is a dramatic

deficit in the interest among historic preservationists regarding sites that explore the more curious parts of our history.

Most of the scholarship on these outlying sites comes from the realm of tourism studies, cultural geography, or psychology. Much work has yet to be done to flesh out dark tourism as it pertains to historical scholarship and preservation efforts. It is time to shed more light on dark tourism and acknowledge how the stories we tell shape our culture, preservation efforts, and drive tourism in America. Historic preservationists must expand their view of what constitutes cultural identity, and therefore heritage, to take a truly inclusive approach to preservation and historical interpretation. Cultural identity is comprised of empirical, verifiable, and documented history, but also our myths, folklore, fiction, cultural representations, and associations.

These historical-folklore-fiction identity conglomerations must be taken into consideration when interpreting historic properties. The inclusion of magical thinking has a strong basis in the history of America. Early American culture of all types—European colonizers, African and Caribbean enslaved individuals, and indigenous peoples—all subscribed to various modes of magical thinking which permeated their culture then, with many beliefs extending into the present via cultural and religious beliefs and traditions. Telling the story of those viewed as "other" or accused of being evil is a valuable lens through which to view the past. Those are the stories of the disenfranchised. To ignore these aspects when interpreting sites is to erase a large portion of our history.

The impact of cultural attitudes on the memorials category of dark tourism becomes evident when we reframe the memorials in the context of the hierarchy of death and concepts such as patriotism. The insidious part of silences is how difficult they are to measure and compare. Why does our society commemorate those who died by a bullet above those who died from a virus?

The stories we tell shape the identity of "place." Both from the creation of self-identification but also how outsiders view a community identity. As I have shown through examples of historical sites connected to the full spectrum of light and dark, the dual-directional impact of historical sites and popular culture is evident. Fiction drives tourism to historical sites and, in turn, historical sites often inspire fiction. At present, it is primarily private entities that reap these benefits through commodification, sometimes without responsible interpretation.

As I demonstrated through research findings concerning tour offerings in New Orleans, there is a clear relationship between the inclusion of dark history topics and economic opportunity. Everett Drake Haynes' work[164] makes an excellent case for the quantifiable economic driver associated with paranormal tourism, but this can be logically extended to similar topics. However, responses from tour guides in New

[164] Everett Drake Haynes, "Paranormal Tourism Study of Economics and Public Policy" (Kansas State University thesis, 2016).

Orleans echo my sentiment for the need to find better language than “dark tourism.” Some tour guides insist that while they include cemetery tours or memorials—they are not dark history tours. Many separated themselves from the stigma of “ghost tours.” For these historical interpreters, it seems even events rooted in the established historical record are marred by the mention of associated paranormal beliefs. It is strange that in a city with heritage so entrenched in stories of magic, paranormal, and crime they would reject any associations with tours that include such content.

New Orleans is a prime example of a culturally rich and tourism-driven economy where the incorporation of folklore, fiction, magic, and the paranormal are embraced when interpreting cultural heritage. The data also shows the dark tourism economic opportunity related to disasters, though there is no clear indication whether this practice is unethical and predatory or one that encourages humanitarian assistance by raising awareness. With the growth of the internet and 24-hour news cycles, one might argue that we all become disaster tourists, in a manner of speaking, as we witness private footage and extensive news coverage of each disaster in real-time. While more people are likely to see an event unfold without witnessing the aftermath firsthand the way a disaster tourist might, I wonder if the impersonal act of witnessing disaster while scrolling through Reddit or TikTok creates a sympathetic and humanitarian response as frequently.

Digital access creates both opportunity and potential pitfalls. At the cutting edge of museum interpretation is the incorporation of augmented reality (AR) technology.

With image repositories, GIS data, and geotagging, there are enormous possibilities for these technologies to aid in storytelling. At the "Body Worlds" exhibit, the use of AR allows visitors to explore digital bodies alongside the static exhibits. Imagine software that could allow you to travel through time to see the images taken in a single location. This access could come in the form of checking out tablets the way we have become familiar with the use of museum headsets for the guided narration of exhibits or simply scanning a QR code that allows your smart device to interface with a digital exhibit on top of the existing structure. The possibilities for digital access are endless. You can now "visit" historical sites and take "tours" on various subjects without ever leaving your home. A visitor may lose much without experiencing the auratic qualities of their digital destination they would have otherwise experienced visiting in person. However, the digital audience reaches further, overcoming geographical and monetary barriers that restrict the ability to travel for many.

This access has led to a new era in dark tourism and engagement boom in true crime shows, documentaries, and podcasts in recent years, with a correlating interest in dark tourism true crime-oriented properties. Unlike most historic dark tourism properties, these true crime related properties have the potential for revictimization of survivors or victims' families. This raises many of the same ethical questions which must be applied to dark tourism sites or potential sites such as the Tennessee State Prison. While atrocities took place there for over a century, many individuals who suffered are

still alive, and there is a fine line between telling their stories and commodifying their pain. These ethical questions are an important philosophical consideration.

Many historians would condemn the commodification of Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, but right or wrong, this commodification is what led to the structure's preservation, whereas the Tennessee State Prison has been left to the elements and decay. In the same vein, dark tourism properties or museums that collect grisly memorabilia or preserve true crime sites are often dismissed and labeled "crime porn." However, these places have collected artifacts which have been neglected by mainstream museums and preservation efforts. "Old Smokey" is arguably the most significant artifact in the carceral history of Tennessee. Without for-profit enterprises like the Alcatraz East Museum, it would likely have been disassembled and thrown away. Should these places and artifacts be condemned because historians make moral judgments about the interest of others in seeing them?

The list of sites that have been lost through neglect or deliberately obliterated is too long to recount. Through neglect, historic preservationists have long been complicit in the erasure of difficult topics. Like the apparent disparities found in memorialization in the United States, time and again, we see how what is preserved is a function of the purpose it may serve.

This erasure is carried out both with the physical structures and the educational void created by shying away from difficult topics. The destruction of uncomfortable

spaces stems from the lack of desire to remember injustices the majority visited on the minorities or the powerful upon the powerless. The average American likely does not think of imperialism or genocide when considering their national identity. The persistent view of slavery in America is that it is part of African American history but not part of White history. This denial is one of the reasons the "big house" remains intact on former plantations, but so few enslaved living quarters persist. We see the product of enslaved peoples' work without seeing the dark, cramped quarters in which they lived. We see this active struggle to repress these uncomfortable portions of our history alive today in the politicization and mischaracterization of critical race theory. It pervades today in grammar school textbooks referring to kidnapped and enslaved people as immigrants or reframing the systemic rape of enslaved women as romantic relationships between them and landowners.

We often erase uncomfortable pieces of history. There is a creek, there is a tree, there is a street corner–that because of my research into my city's dark history, I cannot pass by without thinking of the lynchings that took place, the brutal violence that once inhabited a building, or a site sometimes long gone. I stop to think how many stories are told here. I have read the local popular history books which subtly ring of Lost Cause language and rhetoric, stories that celebrate rich white men and their accomplishments, stories that ignore the ugly parts of our past.

The responsibility to identify these outliers is one of diversity and inclusion for groups who kept oral traditions more often than written documents, with the potential

consequence of obliteration. Dark or peculiar history sites are especially vulnerable and particularly neglected due to these issues.

One of the best practices a difficult site can engage in is the utilization of reconciliation rooms. These are not the reconciliation rooms of the Catholic faith but rather they create an opportunity to heal the emotional toll exacted at a site, potentially an effort made toward healing a larger issue. A psychologist colleague once described therapeutic sessions with this analogy. In a session that includes a discussion of trauma, a responsible therapist should always leave time at the end, as in an exploratory surgery where you may have had to remove damaged pieces, you need time to close up so you don't send someone bleeding and vulnerable back out into the world. To navigate the difficult space of transition between the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the bustling streets of Washington D.C., the curators created a space with softer colors in contrast to the brutal spaces in the exhibits. In this room, the film *Testimony* tells the stories of survivors in terms of resistance, defiance, and rescue.

The Holocaust Museum has also done a particularly good job of navigating difficult content while maintaining availability to all ages by putting disturbing images at an adult eye level. Another option would be to offer separate tours in sites where some content might not be suitable for younger audiences. The implementation of general audiences and adults-only tours creates a wider array of subject matter coverage and the additional ability to speak to the nuances of subjects.

The need for separate tours is not limited to difficult subject matter. The Winchester House uses these adult-only tours as an opportunity to open the more dangerous locations of unfinished portions of the home. Other types of tours at the lighter sites can be expanded to include offerings for Architecture enthusiasts, after-dark or paranormal tours which share ghost stories linked to the site or allow supernatural explorers access at a high premium, or another popular method is to engage in seasonal activities–these sites often garner higher numbers of visitors in September and October. There are as many ways to tell these stories as there are stories to tell.

In *Silencing the Past,* Michel-Rolph Trouillot asserts history is rife with silences and addresses the impact of public contribution. Silence is created by what is left out of the sources when they are created. Silence is the gap in between the sources of the shelf in the archive. Silent are the sources left on the shelf or rarely utilized. Finally, silence is in history as it is constructed.[165]

History, via historical interpretation, is often thought of by historians as something historians are packaging up and delivering to the public. However, through novels, films, memes, books (not by historians), and a million other ways, the public is

[165] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 49.

writing history. The creation of sociocultural identity and attitudes is a collective, collaborative effort. These cultural attitudes shape memorialization practices, historic preservation of dark tourism properties and cultural resources. It is evident that the public is an equal partner in curating historical and cultural identity. History is shaped by the stories we tell, but the stories we tell, in turn, shape our understanding of history.

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