

GHOSTED TOWNS:
PERFORMING TOURISM, PLACE, AND
CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores three distinct memorial sites that are frequented by tourists and that shape cultural memory through performance in the United States of America: Tombstone, Arizona; Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; and Nauvoo, Illinois. Each of these sites, I contend, is representative of influential narratives of national remembrance; each also, however, is simultaneously evidence of hidden and oppressed narratives that haunt the spaces of and performances featured at the site. Tombstone, Arizona, made famous by mediatized portrayals of the 1881 shootout at the O.K. Corral, embodies a hyper-violent romanticization of an individualistic “Wild West,” but is shadowed by more communal and less aesthetic types of violence: the genocide and forced removal of American Indian tribes, the wanton eradication of wildlife, and the commodification of landscape and open space at the heart of westward expansion. Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, advertised as the United States’ “Revolutionary City,” is a corporatized town whose curators attempt to create a balance between historical inquiry and patriotic celebration, but often fail to address the influence and distinctiveness of past and present experiences of African American inhabitants and visitors. Finally, Nauvoo,

Illinois reproduces a time of religious fervor in the history of an “American” religion, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon), but the pristine façade of sacred spatial encounters is disrupted by the doctrinal schisms that are revealed through spatialized performances of LDS history.

All three of these sites contribute to the formation of a conservative US identity that is based on revisionist national histories that whitewash the past; this study challenges that identity based on an examination of how performance is utilized by curators and historians to “make” memorial spaces that, in turn, affect how historical events are recorded and remembered in the United States. I argue within these pages that memorial places are characterized by their curators’ creation and use of “performative space”—space which performs operations of remembrance for visitors—to reinforce particular national narratives of belonging and historical meaning. My analysis of memorial places poses the following questions: How is performance used to produce and circulate national memory? How does embodied experience of historical places affect one’s understanding of the past? How are memorial places created, maintained, and marketed through performance? Ultimately, I claim that, by analyzing how these three memorial places are produced and experienced through performance, one can discover history’s double, the US past which has been lost, hidden, or occluded in the celebratory narratives that have long shaped what it means to be a US American.

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Introduction

Imaginative Geographies and Performative Space¹

It is not down on any map; true places never are.
—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (1851)

All the dreams of my youth have come to life; the first engravings I remember—my father hung views of Rome in the hall—I now see in reality, and everything I have known for so long through paintings, etchings, woodcuts, plaster casts and cork models is now assembled before me. Wherever I walk, I come upon familiar objects in an unfamiliar world; everything is just as I imagined it, yet everything is new.
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey* (1786)

Just because performativity can be defined as the death of grand narratives doesn't mean these can't come back to haunt us—they may haunt us interminably.
—Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else* (2001)

When he spoke in Williamsburg, Virginia in October, 1934, at a ceremony awarding him an honorary degree from The College of William and Mary, then-President of the United States Franklin D. Roosevelt praised the reconstructed Duke of Gloucester Street and other colonial buildings in Colonial Williamsburg, announcing that the street “rightly can be called the most historic avenue in all America.” Roosevelt then continued with an exegesis of space and historical memory at the Revolutionary-era town:

¹ I borrow the term “imaginative geographies” from Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Penguin, 2003), 49.

What a joy it has been...to see how through the renaissance of these physical landmarks the atmosphere of a whole glorious chapter in our history has been recaptured. Something of this spiritual relationship between the past, the present and the future was well described by the first man who sought to colonize America, Sir Walter Raleigh. He said: "It is not the least debt that we owe unto history that it hath made us acquainted with our dead ancestors; and out of the depth and darkness of the earth delivered us their memory and fame."²

This quote is a distillation of the contested nature of performances of consecration at memorial places in the United States. On the surface, in the actual words, Roosevelt's comments outline some of the conservative, celebratory reasons why people make places. However, if one reaches deeper, grasps at the seams, and tears off this patriotic veneer, the celebratory place is revealed as a site that is raw, still bearing the wounds of centuries of genocide, oppression, and historical whitewashing.

In this revised view, the "glorious chapter" of colonization and revolution that Roosevelt speaks of is tainted by the presence of the slave and indentured labor that constructed the physical landmarks in the first place. The "spiritual relationship" between today's citizens and the patriots of old is haunted by the sacrificial bodies of innumerable people whose stories have not been recaptured by the opulent buildings. The colonization of America (by which, of course, he means the United States of America), offered here as an uncritical good in the world, is

² Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at the College of William and Mary upon Receiving an Honorary Degree," October 20, 1934, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 21, 2012, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14766>.

marked by the shadows of those who were pressed aside in a violent, hungry game of clearing and securing the land for a white European posterity. Finally, the dead ancestors, long buried, are reanimated by “history”—but, on further inspection, it is not just their memory and their fame that is brought forth, it is also their infamy and complications.

Roosevelt’s words are compounded by meanings and memorializations he may never have intended; these words are also a *performance*, a dedicatory prayer that was an attempt to “fix” spatial and historical meaning. This consecratory speech, an embodiment of patriotic remembering, emphasizes the great degree to which performances of placemaking and memorialization construct both the physical space of historical tourist sites such as Colonial Williamsburg and the ways in which visitors are permitted to imagine, interact with, and influence those places. Space, memory, and identity have long been tied up together in imaginings of the United States, from indigenous peoples who culled life from the land to early settlers who identified the “new world” as an opportunity for economic, religious, and cultural expansion to contemporary conceptualizations of the country as divided culturally, economically, and racially into urban, suburban, and rural areas. Each of these spatial constructions is simultaneously a performance, one which can potentially push back against sanctioned historical narratives and dig through the topsoil of celebratory places in order to reveal the earth beneath, teeming with counter-memories.

This dissertation examines specific performances at historical tourist sites, but it also uses performance as a paradigm, exploring the space of these sites *as* performance. In these pages, I argue that historical tourist sites are performative spaces—that is, the space of these sites, produced through social interaction and geographical imaginings, actually *performs* for visitors

and *produces the effect* of historicizing and creating memory. Following J.L. Austin's linguistic formulation, descriptions of places and their meanings are *constative*, while the production of space is *performative*.³ The space, by being imagined, consecrated, and visited—and therefore produced—through tourist interactions, *does* something: it creates history. Historical tourist sites thus reaffirm the importance of space, performance, and memory as a matrix through and from which identity is formed. The push and pull between celebratory and corrective narratives produced and circulated through performance at these sites repeats and revises historical knowledge, every repetition simultaneously accreting to the last and slowly (re)producing re-envisioned modes of bodily knowing. Within these modes, space and, ultimately, historical understanding, is produced through the interactions between what Jon McKenzie identifies as “discursive performatives and embodied performances.”⁴

Historical tourist sites can be categorized as *memorial spaces*, a distinct type of performative space that is produced by and produces historical narrative. These spaces are multilayered and unfixed; their history is always in flux. They are similar to Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, as they are identifiable and consecrated sites set aside to help (or force) a community or nation to *remember* their past. They are different, however, in that they are not static historical replacements for memory but rather spatially situated dynamic performative exchanges between (official) history and (individual) embodied memory.

The sites that I explore in this dissertation are also memorial *places*, which is to say they represent distinct, though unfixed, spatial narratives of US history. If, as Michel de Certeau

³ J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 3-7.

⁴ Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 19-20.

writes, “space is a practiced place,” these memorial places are simultaneously imagined and practiced—visited and lived.⁵ Tombstone, Arizona functions as an embodiment of the “Wild West,” a mostly imagined era and location that draws heavily on romantic fantasies of individualism, separatism, and violence in the history of the United States. Colonial Williamsburg offers a patriotic celebration of colonial and American Revolutionary-era Virginia and emphasizes a narrative of the inevitable march of liberatory progress—in spite of the fact that, during the time period represented by Colonial Williamsburg, over fifty percent of the town was enslaved or indentured, and remained so after the war. Nauvoo, Illinois, held sacred by several branches of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presents a site upon which to interrogate sacred memorial space and exposes the performances of contestation that lie at the heart of placemaking.

Each of these memorial places reveals something of the political and memorial structures that consecrate and maintain it, and each is brought into being and into meaning through performance. “Performances,” geographers Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose argue,

Do not take place in already existing locations: the City, the bank, the franchise restaurant, the straight street. These “stages” do not preexist their performances, waiting in some sense to be mapped out by performances; rather, specific performances, bring these spaces into being. And, since these performances are themselves articulations of power, of particular

⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 118.

subject positions, then we maintain that we need to think of spaces too as performative of power relations.⁶

The memorial spaces and places I explore in this dissertation divulge much about the hidden power relations and master narratives that define them. As performative spaces, however, each is also produced in the relationship between curators and tourists and thus open to challenges, transgressions, and reinterpretations.

Establishing a Sense of Place at Historical Tourist Sites

Within the field of cultural geography, establishing and defining a difference between space and place is a primary concern.⁷ Though the relationship between space and place is complex, space has generally been understood as a more abstract concept than place, as Yi-Fu Tuan explains: “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value...The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.”⁸ Tuan’s definition establishes place as a space that has meaning because it is stable—a fairly limited claim, and one that has been complicated in more recent works of spatial theory and human geography.

⁶ Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose, “Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities, and Subjectivities,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (2002): 441.

⁷ I also use “site” regularly in this dissertation; in my usage, a site differs from place or space in that it represents the actual physical location to which tourists travel. This is not to say that a site is devoid of meaning; it is merely a linguistic method I employ to differentiate between the physical location (the site) and social/representational meaning (the space or place) of a particular landscape.

⁸ Yi-Fi Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977; repr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 6.

Doreen Massey, in particular, has argued for a definition of place that allows for more movement and flow; she claims that, in a globalized world, it is no longer possible to limit the experience of place merely to those spaces which remain stable, because no such places exist. In “A Global Sense of Place,” she argues that “places are processes” that do not have clearly defined boundaries or “single, unique identities.”⁹ Massey is quick to point out that this does not preclude the distinctiveness of particular place; however, that uniqueness is being constantly determined and renegotiated rather than being stable as a result of “some long, internalized history.”¹⁰ Thus, place (and, by extension, space) cannot be easily reduced to either the constructed or the inherent. Rather, it is “created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global.”¹¹ Place has elements of both order and of chaos, and spatial meaning emerges in the interplay between the two.

This dissertation takes “place” to mean a distinct nexus of confluent social forces that work together to create the impression of fixity and stability. Both space and place are processes. The difference, however, is that communities (or corporations) consciously produce places through formal, scripted, and everyday performances that work to demarcate boundaries and mark a geographical location as an embodiment of that community’s values. These places, which are produced by and through performance, in turn confine and determine appropriate behaviors. Thus, while places are constantly being created and re-created, this feedback loop of

⁹ Doreen Massey, “A Global Sense of Place,” in *Reading Human Geography*, ed. Trevor Barnes and Derek Gregory (London: Arnold, 1997), 322.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 323.

¹¹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 265.

performance and placemaking works to reinforce the “permitted” behaviors and performances that are simultaneously creating and policing the place. Just as space is openly produced through social interactions, place is likewise produced socially, but these processes are occluded by the sediment of tradition, myth, religion, sacredness, and patriotism, to name but a few of the ideologies that work to obscure the produced nature of places.

Michel de Certeau’s conceptualization of the distinctions between space and place as being rooted in the narratives that are told is instrumental in my definition. Extrapolating from his axiom that “space is a practiced place,” de Certeau writes that “the law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place,” while, “...in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts. In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a ‘proper.’”¹² De Certeau goes on to stress the importance of stories in the conceptualization of place and space. Places, he contends, represent a narrative “determination through objects that are ultimately reducible to the *being-there* of something dead, the law of a ‘place,’” whereas space is a “determination through *operations*, which...specify ‘spaces’ by the actions of historical *subjects*.”¹³

Ultimately, as *spaces*, memorial sites are produced through constantly shifting borders and meanings, created chaotically out of the social relations of current residents, touristic visitors and pilgrims, and the ghostly specters of past inhabitants. In order to transform this space into a

¹² De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 118.

¹³ *Ibid.*

place, then, narrative, performance, and spatial structures must all come together, preserving certain stories about certain spaces and discarding others. “A place,” de Certeau suggests, “is...an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability.”¹⁴ De Certeau’s use of *implies* is very important here; it suggests that the stability is fleeting, false, illusionistic; it is this unreliability of place that ties it in with Massey’s idea of space as chaotic and only bearing the appearance of fixedness. Like performance, the stability of place is simultaneously ephemeral and lasting; constantly receding and yet leaving its influential sedimented traces everywhere. Places may be unstable, chaotic, and ever-changing, but they also represent and influence powerful ideologies that structure daily life in a particular community. The rootedness *implied* by places may be fleeting, but it exists nonetheless.

The curators of memorial sites, through the politicized acts of place making, are attempting to create not only a stable geographical site through prescriptive spatial ordering, but also a stable narrative and performance genealogy of the site—in essence, they are trying to halt the flux that typifies space, and create a bounded, comprehensible, and finished site with a clear, progressive history. As geographer Karen Till argues:

When people make places as stable sites that materially embody the past, they are attempting to give form to their search for a mythic self, a coherent timeless identity. Moreover, in the process of locating and mapping the past through place, social groups and individuals give shape to their desire to be connected to that which is no longer metaphysically

¹⁴ Ibid., 117.

present, but that which continues to have an important presence in their contemporary lives.¹⁵

People who create places and mark out important touristic and sacred sites work to create a quantifiable link with the past; this act ensures that such places are always already haunted by what has come before and set them apart. Such hauntings, though, are like spaces—invariably uncontrollable—and creators cannot predict which ghosts will be evoked in the wake of their place making.

Pierre Nora's conceptualization of memorial and historical space is particularly helpful in understanding how and why cultural groups make places of sites of origin that define and defend specific narrative constructions of their own identities and histories. In his 1989 essay "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," Nora explains that if a society has to set aside "places of memory," it is because that memory is no longer clear and present in the community—members must visit these newly consecrated sites in order to simulate recollections of the past. As a condition of modern existence, we simply are too far from memory to inhabit it any longer and now must make do with a geographically situated copy. Distinguishing between history and memory, Nora claims that, though foundational events can impart meaning to a place, it is the site rather than the event that carries this memory. He expounds upon this point: "Indeed, it is the exclusion of the event itself that defines the *lieu de mémoire*. Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events."¹⁶

¹⁵ Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 14.

¹⁶ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 21.

Following Massey and Nora I understand memorial space as uniquely positioned to create and circulate distinct national narratives that metonymically stand in for and replace the histories upon which they are founded. Memorial space, then, is produced by social relations that are comprehensible, discoverable, and ordered, but is also a result of the chaotic, which “results from the happenstance juxtapositions, the accidental separations, the often paradoxical nature of the spatial arrangements which result from the operation of all these causalities.”¹⁷ Consequently, although memorial space may seem to have inherent qualities, that essentialism is actually a result of the clamorous, and therefore difficult to trace, interplay of social relations that produce space.

Like Massey, Henri Lefebvre also conceives of space as multifocal and constantly in flux. Putting forth the bewitchingly simple axiom “(social) space is a (social) product,” Lefebvre effectively characterizes *all* space as socially produced because, once a space is identified or hailed into being, it has necessarily entered into the realm of social production.¹⁸ Although a kind of “absolute space,” which consists of “fragments of nature located at sites which were chosen for their intrinsic qualities” does theoretically exist, this type of space ceases to function as absolute as soon as it is consecrated or even recognized, rendering the category basically useless outside of an ontological framework of spatial development.¹⁹ While memorial space may have claims to genesis in and emergence from absolute space (sites such as Tombstone, Arizona, for example, rely to a great extent on the “essential” natural qualities of the landscape in which they

¹⁷ Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 266.

¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

are situated), in reality it is simultaneously a historically marked space and one that is constantly being re-produced in the present. As Lefebvre writes:

The historical and its consequences, the “diachronic,” the “etymology” of locations in the sense of what happened at a particular spot or place and thereby changed it – all of this becomes inscribed in space. The past leaves its traces; time has its own script. Yet this space is always, now and formerly, a *present* space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality.²⁰

Memorial spaces traffic in the magical iteration of historical meaning that Lefebvre refers to when he contends that “all of this [the historical and its consequences] becomes inscribed in space.” The temporal collapse of spatial meaning in memorial places, however, where the “traces of the past” comingle and coproduce with the “*present* space,” leads to a performative and spatial challenge of what Rebecca Schneider has called “the *habit* of linear time.”²¹ Memorial spaces thus engage with and reveal the haphazard and chaotic production of places and can provoke visitors and curators alike to (re)consider the ways their performances produce space.

In addition to his division of space into ontological types (absolute, historical, and abstract), Lefebvre also establishes a useful conceptual triad to explain how space is experienced and talked about. This triad consists of *spatial practice*, which “embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation”; *representations of space*, which encompasses verbal attempts to categorize and

²⁰ Ibid., 37.

²¹ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 19. Emphasis in the original.

understand space, that is the body knowledge produced *about* space; and *representational spaces*, which is “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users.’”²² The conceptual triad can be applied to all spaces; there is a dialectical relationship between these three elements of space, and it is within the interstices of that relationship that space is produced. The definition of representational space in particular, however, offers a particularly useful insight into the ways that memorial spaces are experienced.

“Representational spaces,” Lefebvre continues, “need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history—in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people.”²³ Memorial spaces, whether they are imagined, lived, or visited, thrive on this lack of consistency and cohesiveness, offering room for both structured, top-down narratives of spatial meaning, such as those provided by governments, religions, and other site curators, as well as chaotic, bottom-up narratives such as those provided by individual tourists, pilgrims, and protestors. Memorial space is paradoxical, at once imagined and embodied, systematic and uncontrolled, focused and heterogeneous. As a subdivision of memorial space in general, touristic space is also constantly in flux, the carefully orchestrated narrative and performative spaces threatened by the individual embodied experience of visitors.

Representational space presents a challenge to representations of space—whereas representations of space are attempts to concretize the meaning of socially produced spaces, representational space is actual lived, experienced, and embodied space, albeit overlaid with

²² Lefebvre, 33. Emphasis in the original.

²³ *Ibid.*, 41.

symbols and codes that structure the experiences that are possible within the space. In this way, it echoes de Certeau's distinction between place as a *seemingly* fixed concept and space as lived, messy, and produced in the circulation of the present. In memorial places, the representations of the space encompass the imagined maps visitors bring with them to the site—their expectations—and the prescriptive narratives and behaviors encouraged by curators. The embodied spatial experiences in which such visitors engage upon arrival can be classified as representational space that either supports or challenges these imagined expectations.

Lefebvre's representational space or embodied practice also resembles Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which he defines as “principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them... [These principles] can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.”²⁴ Embodied practices and performances reinforce and manifest these unconscious structures of belief and understanding, and are “the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a ‘second sense’ or a second nature”—through spatial interactions and relations.²⁵ A person's habitus intimately affects the way he or she encounters, interacts with, and understands national narratives and the memorial places that embody them.

Paul Connerton identifies something of an embodied habitus as “social habit-memory,” a kind of group memory that is transferred through commemorative ceremonies and bodily

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press; repr., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 53.

²⁵ Randal Johnson, Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 5.

practices. Memory is preserved and transmitted (often unconsciously) through performances of prohibition and prescription, as “culturally specific postural performances provide...a mnemonics of the body.”²⁶ Joseph Roach, in turn, expands the notion of Connerton’s social habit-memory by emphasizing the element of “the virtual” in embodied memory—foregrounding bodily agency—in his idea of “kinesthetic imagination,” which he defines as “human agents [drawing] on resources of memory stored up (but also reinvented).”²⁷ Shifting emphasis to the imagined invests people with the agency to determine at least some of their embodied interactions with memory; because all bodily interactions are also necessarily spatial ones, social performances produce and shape memorial space.

Although Bourdieu argues that the habitus as a conceptual structure does not rule out the possibility of agency, he nevertheless suggests that even agented choices, though conscious, are inflected by the inescapable influence of the habitus, because *all* experience is refracted through the “structuring structures” that are built throughout childhood: “the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the habitus, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences.”²⁸ At memorial sites, habitus is produced and reproduced through the interplay of the spatio-imaginary maps visitors carry with them and the ritualized, embodied performances of civic, religious, and historical tourism and pilgrimage in which they engage. However, even though agented choices at memorial sites are overdetermined by the agent’s habitus, choice remains present, and the site

²⁶ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 36; 74.

²⁷ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 26.

²⁸ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54.

of confrontation between the spatio-performative mood and narrative advanced by curators and a visitor's knowledge and mode of being in the world can be a productive locus of investigation upon which to explore the push and pull between agency and proscribed bodily engagements with a place. Somewhat counterintuitively, the policing of spatial boundaries and performances in places, both by curators and by a visitor's personal habitus, actually allows for agency and participation by creating limits that can be transgressed and narratives that can be questioned, resisted, or accepted.

Each of the historical tourist sites I examine represents a distinct and seemingly stable memorial place, with curators who attempt to control the narrative, memorial meaning of the site. The interactions between visitors, workers, and curators, however, introduces a volatile element into the mix and exposes the instability at the core of memorial spaces and places. These spatially stable-appearing sites are infected with their own chaos and instability; although geography allows for an imaginative rootedness, these places and spaces are actually multivalent and constantly in flux—a house made of mud and built on the ever-shifting sands of memory.

Performing Tourism

“Travel,” de Certeau writes, “is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by some sort of reversal, ‘an exploration of the deserted places of memory,’ the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places, and the ‘discovery’ of relics and legends...in short, something like an ‘uprooting of one’s origins’ (Heidegger)?”²⁹ Travel as tourism allows for both an “uprooting”

²⁹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 107.

and something like a “re-rooting” or a reinvigoration of one’s sense of self and one’s place in history and permits visitors the opportunity to thrust their roots deeper by providing guests a phenomenological encounter with the place of their origins. Nearly all historical tourist sites build upon the concept of tradition and understanding an originary past as that past continues to influence the present. The process of discovery performed at tourist sites is, however, an illusion; what appears as a recovering of deep cultural memories is actually the spontaneous production of *newly created* memories through performance and spatial experience. The place of these sites presents only a mirage: the mere appearance of holding history in its grasp.

This dissertation explores the nature of performative space and argues that historical tourist sites in the United States are particularly rich and complex sites of cultural memory maintained through their use of space and performance to shape the specific histories that they produce and circulate among visitors. Tourism is a more than one trillion-dollar industry that supports over 7.7 million jobs and funnels nearly two billion tourists through the United States in a given year.³⁰ Because of this reach, tourism is a particularly salient producer of embodied knowledge, both for tourists and for curators and workers. Many people, in increasing numbers, are unwilling to settle for vicarious or synthetic experiences of historical or far-away places; they rather insist on seeing and experiencing the *place* themselves.

This is not to say that tourists always seek an “authentic” experience. Within the field of tourist studies, much of the literature takes up the question of the authenticity of the tourist experience, using verity as a measurement of a successful tourist experience. In one of the

³⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Travel and Tourism Spending Increased in Fourth Quarter 2011 (BEA 12-09),” released March 21, 2012, accessed March 26, 2012, <http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/industry/tourism/tournewsrelease.htm>.

earliest considerations of authenticity at modern tourist sites, Daniel Boorstin identifies tourism (which he considers as distinct from “traveling”) as a pseudo-event, with an “ambiguous” relationship to reality.³¹ Dean MacCannell likewise suggests that the tourist is trapped in a vain search for authentic experience through access to a “backdoor” version of the tourist site, while Umberto Eco excoriates “hyperreal” tourist attractions, “where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake.”³² Indeed, as Scott Magelssen details in *Living History Museums: Undoing History Through Performance*, many experts in the fields of museum studies and living history interpretation view authenticity and the compilation of a complete history as their primary goal.³³ An increasing body of tourism scholarship, however, recognizes touristic agency and postmodern savvy. John Urry and Maxine Feifer have written about what Feifer terms “post-tourists” and point out that many tourists actually revel in the *in*-authenticity of the sites and enjoy the interplay of past and present, recreation and representation.³⁴ Urry explains, “‘post tourists’ almost delight in the inauthenticity

³¹ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage, 1987), 11-2; 77-117. Although Boorstin distinguishes between travel and tourism (and travelers and tourists), I use the two terms interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

³² Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 92; Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 8. For further discussion of the relationship between tourism and authenticity, see Christopher Balme, “Staging the Pacific: Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center,” *Theatre Journal* 50.1 (March 1998): 53-70; Kevin Mark Britz, “Long May Their Legend Survive: Memory and Authenticity in Deadwood, South Dakota; Tombstone, Arizona; and Dodge City, Kansas,” PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 1999; Eric Gable and Richard Handler, “After Authenticity at an American Heritage Site,” *American Anthropologist* 98.3 (1996): 568-78; and Bruce McConachie, “Slavery and Authenticity: Performing a Slave Auction at Colonial Williamsburg,” *Theatre Annual* 51 (1998): 71-81.

³³ Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 1-52.

³⁴ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2002); and Maxine Feifer, *Tourism in History: From Imperial Rome to the Present* (New York: Stein and Day, 1985). See also Chris Rojek and John Urry, ed., *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997). In some ways, Eco also makes this argument, but he heartily disapproves of this tendency in the contemporary tourist.

of the normal tourist experience. ‘Post tourists’ find pleasure in the multiplicity of tourist games. They know there is *no* authentic tourist experience, that there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played.”³⁵ Gertrude Stein’s famous quip about Oakland, California could thus be adapted to fit today’s post-tourist: they know “there is no there there,” and the recognition of that absence is part of their pleasure in the site.³⁶

And yet...in spite of an increasing awareness of (and revelry in) inauthenticity on the part of the traveling public, the auratic power of *being there* remains. Tourism and travel are distinctly embodied acts; performed movement is axiomatic to the tourist experience, whether one is seeking for historical authenticity, ironic detachment, or something in between. Tourism, David Crouch explains, is “a practice of ontological knowledge, an encounter with space that is both social and incorporates an embodied feeling of ‘doing.’”³⁷ That is, tourism requires a phenomenological engagement with a site; not even the most cynical post-tourist would claim to have *been* to Capetown or Washington, D.C. because she had visited websites that describe the city. Tourist sites thus present an ideal locus upon which to base an investigation of performative space—they are spaces that *require* a performed engagement from visitors.

Because of its requirement of bodily engagement, many performance theorists have taken tourism as a subject of study, beginning with Richard Schechner’s analysis of the “authentic” and “culture contact” in tourism performances. Although tourism has certainly changed “traditional” cultural performances at many tourist locations (especially indigenous

³⁵ Urry, 12. Emphasis in the original.

³⁶ Gertrude Stein, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 289.

³⁷ David Crouch, “Surrounded by Place: Embodied Encounters,” in *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, ed. Simon Coleman and Mike Crang (New York: Berghan Books, 2002), 211.

performances), he argues, such changes are not necessarily negative nor are they simply a reflection of the corrupting colonialist influence of visitors from outside the community clamoring to see “original” practices performances. Theatre, ritual, and performance, Schechner reminds us, are always changing and in flux, always reacting to influences and shifts from both within and without the community; tourist expectations are just one more influence in this process. Additionally, influence is never a “one-way street”; tourists who are also practitioners will take from their travels new ways of practicing and thinking about performance. In an increasingly mobile and globalized world, he argues, tourism’s influence on performance is so prevalent and so complete that eventually “theatre historians will regard tourism as of as much importance as the exchange between England and the Continent was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”³⁸

Although this project does not look specifically at the reciprocal influence of theatrical performance and tourism, the cultural exchange of performance practices (both formal and cultural) through travel haunts each chapter. In particular, this dissertation explores the ways in which performance is used to create and circulate national narratives of remembrance at heritage tourist sites—that is, at places of memory set aside specifically to simulate and stimulate certain kinds of remembering. The work of three performance theorists in particular inform this aspect of the project: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Scott Magelssen, and Rebecca Schneider.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* is a formative volume in the field of performance and tourism studies; in it she argues that heritage is a performative and political process of identifying, naming, and preserving “places and practices

³⁸ Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Routledge Classics ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 143.

in danger of disappearing.”³⁹ She suggests that objects, buildings, and even people are *made* ethnographic through being named as such, and that these items and people are representations of themselves and stand in metonymically for the whole of their spaces, cultures, religions, and histories.⁴⁰ Likewise important in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s analysis is a recognition that the structures of knowledge employed by ethnographers, museum curators, and creators of heritage sites actually determine what is seen and appreciated as “historical” and worth saving. There is no universal standard, she argues, for what is to be preserved or interpreted. In fact, that which is forgotten is as important to national and cultural narratives of memory as that which is remembered.⁴¹

In his work on living history performance, Magelssen also considers how the selection of what is preserved in museums affects what is determined to be “historical.” He explores the historiography and continuing influence of performance in living history museums and argues that performance at these sites is a way of “undoing” notions of time as a “vulgar...continuum.”⁴² He also contends that institutions use performance to enhance their reputations as historical authorities and to “*make* accuracy and authenticity.”⁴³ By unpacking the historical claims and performative turns made by living history museums, Magelssen challenges the very notion of authenticity at tourist sites and offers an alternative history of the living history museum—one in which genealogies of performance and analyses of distinct performance practices are used to

³⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 150.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁴² Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, xiii.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xiv.

investigate “new possibilities of historical display and reenactments that break from the limited dichotomy of linear past and present.”⁴⁴

Magelssen’s book focuses specifically on notions of time and challenges how history is conceived and recorded. Rebecca Schneider identifies theatricality as a method for evoking and revealing time’s flexibility, especially in art and performance that emphasizes the “touchability” of time, past and future: “The undoing of linear time,” she writes, “is part of the nervousness or queasiness of theatricality, contributing to the uncertainty of where and how time *takes place*: today’s agendas necessarily contain, recompose, recite, and *touch* [the past], *and vice versa*.”⁴⁵ Schneider offers living history museums and battlefield reenactments as touristic sites that engage in the kind of “queasy” theatricality that spotlights the shifting slipperiness of time.

The challenges to ontological knowledge and linear time presented by these works offer possibilities for tourist agency and interaction beyond that which is established by curators of the sites. Each work fails, however, to consider more fully the role that *space* and *spatial performances* play in the ethnographical creation and circulation of historical meaning at tourist sites. I contend that time is, fundamentally, also a spatial designation, and that tourist sites trade on the notion of place as stopping or arresting time’s progression. Thus place at tourist sites is often depicted as an antidote to the kind of “nervousness or queasiness of theatricality” that Schneider identifies: it is offered as literal solid ground to the swell of unmoored time and performance that swirls under history and reenactment.

⁴⁴ Ibid., xx.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27. Emphasis in the original.

One way that tourist sites attempt to accomplish this mooring is through the careful scripting of space and performance into certain narratives. Although it is inaccurate to suggest that each site has a single narrative that is being advanced, it is nevertheless true that each site has a specific set of narratives that are sanctioned and offered by curators as the fullest possible interpretation of the linear progression of history and the ability of historical space to witness for the past. The tourist, however, possesses agency and approaches these sites with spatial maps and narratives of her own; the interplay of the site's attempted scripting and the tourist's spatial maps becomes a matrix of cultural memory. Ultimately, I argue, the space of the tourist site "performs" alongside the actors in more traditional forms of performed entertainment, influencing both the tourist's personal memory and her understanding of the site.

Agency is a central concept in de Certeau's conceptualization of space in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where he outlines his theory of strategies and tactics. Strategies, according to de Certeau, are practices utilized by those who have power or control over a space to shape and construct the space in a way conducive to their goals. Tactics, on the other hand, are practices utilized by people who live in and move through the space. These tactics can either resist the strategies put in place by the controlling power or acquiesce to them, but the important element is that the actors who are part of a space have some agency in determining their encounter with that space.⁴⁶ This agency cuts both ways, however, and performance can be used by visitors both to advance and reaffirm conservative, congratulatory narratives as well as to confront and intervene tactically in the history being produced.

⁴⁶ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 36-37.

This project argues that the administrators of historical tourist sites seek to shape and control experience, but tourists who visit Tombstone, Colonial Williamsburg, and Nauvoo often resist the strategies employed by these controllers of these sites. Tourists are more interested, I suggest, in realizing their own expected experience of the site as conditioned by their personal spatial maps than in fulfilling the site administrators' strategized experience. I considered both the intent of site administrators, as indicated by official websites, advertising, and materials available at the site, and the actual experience of visitors, based on personal interviews I conducted onsite and comments on weblogs, travel websites, and in guest books. Additionally, I situate the tourist experience of each site within a narrative of my own personal experiences of visiting these sites and my individual reaction to the strategies employed there. I juxtapose the curators' strategies and tourists' tactics in order to gain a better understanding of how space and place might be perceived and utilized by tourists who visit these sites.

Producing and Circulating Cultural Memory

Cultural memory, Astrid Eril argues, "refers to the symbolic order, the media, institutions, and practices by which social groups construct a shared past."⁴⁷ The social groups are determined through heredity and identification; this "symbolic order" represents an immersion in and an affiliation with a certain group and is obtained both purposefully and unconsciously, as a byproduct of existence in a community. Rooted in Maurice Halbwachs's concept of collective memory, cultural memory draws on the recognition that memories shared

⁴⁷ Astrid Eril, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Eril and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 5. For more on how social groups are organized through both hereditary and voluntary means, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, new ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

by members of a group are influenced not only by the more theoretical “social frameworks of memory,” as Halbwachs terms it, but also by the memories encoded in the material world: in bodies, objects, and landscapes.⁴⁸ As such, the concept of cultural memory has provided fertile ground for the performance scholars who recognize the primacy of the body in the production and circulation of national identities and histories and whose work most influences this dissertation.

This project uses performance as a “methodological lens” that allows me to “analyze [space] *as* performance.”⁴⁹ In it, I work to define how space as performance functions at historical tourist sites and how that performative space produces and circulates particular national narratives while simultaneously allowing for spectatorial agency among visitors and tourists. Building upon the work of “‘dramaturgical’ anthropologists” such as Victor Turner, Erving Goffman, and Clifford Geertz, I argue that space and place at tourist sites are areas of contestation, particularly between curator and visitor, each of whom works to shape the space of the tourist site to fit her imaginary spatial map(s) associated with the site.⁵⁰ Tourists inhabiting and producing space and place at these tourist sites are participating in what Richard Schechner has termed “twice-behaved behavior,” repeating the events and movements in and through space that historically marked this particular site as important.⁵¹ Finally, performance theory and

⁴⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

⁴⁹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.

⁵⁰ I borrow the designation of Turner, Goffman, and Geertz as “dramaturgical” anthropologists from Taylor, who uses the term to categorize anthropologists who use the terminology of theatre and performance studies to explain cultural human behavior. Taylor, 7.

⁵¹ Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 36.

theories of cultural memory provide ways to understand how traditional performances such as pageants, reenactments, and second-person characterization are used to produce, preserve, and circulate cultural memory at historic tourist sites.

While Pierre Nora focuses on the place or site as the primary conduit for memory, Paul Connerton argues that it is actually through bodily practices that memory is preserved and transmitted. In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton distinguishes between *incorporating* and *inscribing* practices. Incorporating practices, he explains, are behaviors and cultural mores that are, intentionally or not, communicated through the body.⁵² Inscribing practices, on the other hand, are those practices that intentionally record and communicate information, such as texts, photographs, and encyclopedias. Connerton explains that inscribing practices function to codify historical narratives: “When the memories of a culture begin to be transmitted mainly by the reproduction of their inscriptions rather than by ‘live’ tellings, improvisation become increasingly difficult and innovation is institutionalized.”⁵³ Official historical narratives are traditionally communicated through inscribing practices, but historical tourist sites complicate such narratives by utilizing both inscribing (brochures, timelines, and placards) and incorporating practices (physical location, guides, actors, and impersonators). Reading Connerton and Nora against one another, this dissertation argues that the use of the body and place to tell the stories of a site renews the possibility for tourists to script their own stories of the site by creating rifts and cracks in the narratives provided by the site’s curators.

⁵² Connerton, 72.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 75.

Building on Connerton and Jacques Derrida's notion of *supplementarity*, Joseph Roach suggests that performance functions as a "placeholder" of sorts for events, figures, and pasts that cannot be replaced.⁵⁴ "Performance," he concludes, "stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and replace. Hence flourish the abiding yet vexed affinities between performance and memory, out of which blossom the most florid nostalgias for authenticity and origin."⁵⁵ This project argues that these "florid nostalgias" form the very foundation of much of the performance programming and spatial strategizing at historic tourist sites, and that these strategies necessarily fail because the site, to some extent, aspires vainly to embody and replace historical space with present place. This failure presents an opportunity for tourists to employ their own tactics in decoding and experiencing the place of the site. Although it is true that many tourists do not seek authenticity, it is nevertheless also true that most attempt to recover something of the aura of a place by visiting there; these sites have meaning because of what transpired there, or their origin in cultural memory. The failure of these nostalgias, however, allows tourists to bring their own meanings to the site, and their own understandings of the site's origins, making their own cultural memories supplementary: their memories both accrete to and stand in for the site's history.⁵⁶

Historical tourist sites are, by definition, places of absence. They exist as attractions because of what is missing – the people and events that are long gone but that leave their mark on the places left behind. In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida explores the concept of the

⁵⁴ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 3-4; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, corr. ed. (1976; repr., Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 144.

⁵⁵ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 3-4.

⁵⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 200.

specter and the ghosts that haunt the present. The ghost, he maintains, is both “repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time*, makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time...let us call it a *hauntology*.”⁵⁷ Derrida claims that the present is always haunted by both the past and the future; this is especially true at historical tourist sites, which are prefigured on the ghosts that haunt them.⁵⁸ The ghost is non-being, in between materiality and ethereality: simultaneously an absence and a presence. I suggest that when actors represent historical figures associated with the site, the performances make plain the hauntology of the site: the actors perform as what Roach would call *surrogates*, replacing the absent historical figures.⁵⁹ This surrogation, however, actually works to make the absences more obvious, as it can never be fully realized.

Derrida’s conception of hauntology also has to do with the recurrent wounds of modernity: the events and occurrences that we would rather forget but that have fully shaped our lives. This is a particularly salient element of hauntology that can be found and felt at historical sites. Colonial Williamsburg, for example, is stained by the fact that, during colonial times, over half of its population was of African descent; many of these people were enslaved, several by “founding fathers” of the United States. Nauvoo, as a frontier town and starting point for a great westward migration, is haunted by the genocide that was a result of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. And Tombstone is marked by the casual and constant cruelty and violence that is so often romanticized in popular portrayals of the Wild West. This dissertation considers how each

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), 10. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁸ Derrida presents hauntology as a “discourse of the end or the discourse about the end” and a “staging for the end of history.” Ibid. The end of history (along with the past), then, haunts the present – these two dimensions cannot be separated.

⁵⁹ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 2.

of these sites grapples with these wounds through performance and space. The hauntology of performance and space allows for touristic tactics to be utilized to resist standardized narratives; each tourist encounters the site through her or his own ideological understanding of these events and occurrences and thus is haunted by unique specters, regardless of the specters and ghosts sanctioned by the site's curators.

Utilizing Derrida, Diana Taylor makes a clear connection between performance and hauntology, explaining that “performance makes visible (for and instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life. The specters, made manifest through performance, alter future phantoms, future fantasies.”⁶⁰ In the tourist performances that I examine in this dissertation, the specters of the past influence performances by both the interpreters employed by or owners of the sites and the tourists themselves, whose actions are conscribed by their own habitus and the “rules” and mores of tourist and museum behavior. Some scenarios made visible by performance are those that comprise the positive elements of US American historical identity: liberty, revolution, individuality, and religious freedom. These performances are also haunted, however, by the scenarios of enslavement, westward expansion, and religious contention that construct the underside of the US American national imaginary.

In suggesting that the space of tourist sites is haunted, I draw also on Marvin Carlson's argument in *The Haunted Stage* in which he claims that “spatial ghosting” can be compared to the “experience of pilgrims who have visited Jerusalem during the centuries and seen reenactments of those same events staged in the actual streets of the ancient city, ghosted not by

⁶⁰ Taylor, 143.

the pilgrims' personal memories of these streets but by cultural memories that made these streets, in [Victor] Hugo's words, 'silent witnesses' of the actual events being reenacted there."⁶¹ The tourist site, too, is imagined as a silent witness, although one that is now expected to shed its reticence and share its secrets with that modern-day pilgrim, the tourist.⁶² It is through this ghosting that tourist sites gain and maintain much of their meaning in the contemporary world.

This ghosting is, of course, also based on a collective knowledge of a historical narrative, one that a site's curators are both capitalizing on and advancing. But many theorists of history and historiography challenge the possibility of a "true" or "accurate" narrative. Roland Barthes, in "The Discourse of History," points out that historical writing falls victim to the same tendencies to narrativize as do poems, plays, and novels.⁶³ This, Barthes argues, interferes with historical writing's ability to effectively communicate facts, a claim echoed by Hayden White in "The Fictions of Factual Representation."⁶⁴ I will utilize Barthes's and White's theories of narrativity and history, along with de Certeau's in *The Writing of History* (1987), to challenge the narratives established by curators at these tourist sites. Additionally, I use these theories of narrativity to highlight ways in which tourists can resist the official historical narrative, substituting their own spatial experience for the myth-, documentary-, or faith-based historical narratives promoted at the sites.

⁶¹ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 138.

⁶² Though this project certainly lends itself to it, I am not broadly using pilgrimage theory throughout because I want the emphasis to remain on the site and its space/place, rather than on the journey to the site, or the pilgrim's movement *through* space. In my chapter concerning Nauvoo, however, I do utilize some pilgrimage theory to tease out the religious significance of the reverse journeys many families take to return to Nauvoo from Utah and other LDS strongholds in the West.

⁶³ Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981): 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-18; Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Performative Spaces, Theatrical Places

My previous explication of the differences between place and space engaged in a project of excavating the ontology of space through the classification of its different types. While such an exercise is useful in tracing the lineage of thought about space and place, it does not ultimately account for all that space is or does. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that memorial space is, in fact, *performative space*—it is meant to *do* something; it is space *as* performance but also space that *performs*.

Performative space can be defined as a “trialectics” of performance, space, and cultural memory.⁶⁵ It combines de Certeau’s definitions of both place and space: it is simultaneously the representations of *place*—the apparently static imagined geography of, say, a sacred or civic place—and the constant and unpredictable re-configuration of *space* that is produced by the social interactions and performances of human agents. To recognize space as performative is to admit its simultaneous construction in both the imaginations and actions of spatial actors; it is also to acknowledge its libratory (and often chaotic) potential. Identifying memorial places as performative spaces affirms the elements of power and politics inherent in the creation of these places yet allows for individual encounters with and tactical responses to the attempted hegemonic creation of national or community spaces of remembrance. Such a designation also

⁶⁵ I borrow this term from Edward Soja, who uses it to describe aspects of Lefebvre’s spatial theories in *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 61.

recognizes the fact that memorial spaces are produced by bodies that are fundamentally shaped by performative processes of identity formation.⁶⁶

Performative space relies upon the interaction of expectation and behavior. Borrowing from and building upon Edward Said's concept of "imaginative geographies," I propose that tourists approach sites with preconceived spatial maps, or imaginary spatio-performative landscapes, already in mind.⁶⁷ Visitors subconsciously create these imagined geographies through sensual accretion—what Said, working through Gaston Bachelard, calls a "poetic process."⁶⁸ Working to further solidify the meaning of community by determining who is included in and excluded from certain spaces, "imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away."⁶⁹

These spatial maps function similarly to Hans Robert Jauss's "horizon of expectations," which Robert C. Holub defines as "an intersubjective system or structure of expectations, a 'system of references' or a mind-set that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text."⁷⁰ The important distinction between "spatial maps" and "horizons of expectations" is that the "system

⁶⁶ Although the literature on performativity and identity is vast, much of the theory that underpins the understanding of performative constructions of identity has been articulated by Judith Butler. See especially Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 270-82; Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁶⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Penguin, 2003), 49.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 55. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964; repr. with forward by John R. Stilgoe, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

⁶⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 55.

⁷⁰ Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), 59. See also Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1997).

of references” to which I refer has its basis in a geographical landscape rather than a text, and the imaginary landscape that tourists bring to the site is based on a three-dimensional physical reality. These spatial maps are what make places and spaces comprehensible, and present landscapes need the past to illuminate their meaning. As David Lowenthal writes:

We selectively perceive what we are accustomed to seeing... Every object, every grouping, every view is intelligible partly because we are already familiar with it, through our own past and through tales heard, books read, pictures viewed. We see things simultaneously as they are and as we viewed them before; previous experience suffuses all present perception.⁷¹

This previous experience conditions what tourists expect to see and experience when they visit a site; the space at the site is therefore expected to “perform” according the tourist’s prior imagining of it. While the historic tourist’s experience may not be historically authentic, in order for tourists to be satisfied, it must at least partially fulfill their expectations, according to the individual spatial maps they bring with them to the site. Additionally, these spatial maps are fully embodied: perceiving and imagining are, fundamentally, phenomenological practices; spatial experience is as well. Therefore, to methodologically ground my concept of performative space, I turn to phenomenology, particularly as used by theorists of performance and theory.⁷²

⁷¹ David Lowenthal, “Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory,” *Geographical Review* 65.1 (Jan 1975): 6.

⁷² See Stanton B. Garner, *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and Vivian Patraka, “Spectacles of Suffering: Performing Presence, Absence, and Historical Memory at U.S. Holocaust Museums,” in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 89-107.

Space and place at these sites, I argue, function as theatrical as well as imaginative and physical. In *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*, Stanton Garner argues that theatrical space is ultimately created by the bodies present: “theatrical space is ‘bodied’ in the sense of being comprised of bodies positioned within a perceptual field, but it is also ‘bodied’ in the more fundamental sense of being ‘bodied forth,’ oriented in terms of a body that exists not just as the object of perception, but as its originating site.”⁷³ Bodies create the space, and the space then performs for the spectators. Garner’s definition of theatrical space is also connected to Henri Lefebvre’s concept of socially constructed space; each requires bodily interactions in order to produce space. Not only is the memorial space of these sites performative, it is theatrical, *created through performance*: performance of tourists to and inhabitants of the town, bodies from the past and bodies in the present, ghosted and material traces. Performances, both rehearsed and impromptu, delineate the space of memory and produce imaginative geographies that include and exclude, marking communities by who is permitted to perform and in what ways.

Just as communities police their members through complex systems of bodily entitlements and prohibitions, so memorial places attempt to control their boundaries through the types of performance that are permitted and encouraged within their space(s). Although the link may seem tenuous at first, I would like to connect the policing of imagined geographical boundaries with the policing of the body that Judith Butler identifies in the following passage: “Gender,” she argues, “ought not to be constructed as a stable identity of locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in

⁷³ Garner, 4.

an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.⁷⁴ In the production of performative space, the stylized acts that are repeated are the rituals of placemaking that designate a site as a seemingly stable locus for the practice of national or communal identities: the consecration of the land, the establishment of a documentary historical authority, the political marking of places of national importance, and the repetition of touristic visiting that serves to reinforce a place's identification as representative of itself.

Each of these ritualized placemaking behaviors is a performance; if they are not done publicly (even if the only witness is the land itself), then the place is not actually *made*. Although the place may exist imaginatively, without a performed grounding in the landscape, it remains unmade. This requirement situates space as distinctly performative; again, to paraphrase Butler, “[Spatial] reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed.”⁷⁵ Performance thus becomes an indispensable part of the construction not just of imaginative geographies (through the habitus and Connerton's incorporating behaviors, both of which are embodied and, therefore, spatialized) but also of the production of memorial places and spaces.

Performative spaces are identifiable because they are iterable and divisible from other kinds of space. Since the behaviors (usually ceremonies of consecration and rituals of travel) that create and maintain them are repeated, they become intelligible, and these repeated behaviors serve to perpetually reinforce a site's particular meaning. The conditions of iterability required to mark and identify a place also, however, bear within them the seeds of their own deconstruction.

⁷⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.

⁷⁵ Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Construction,” 278.

As Derrida, thinking through J.L. Austin and John Searle's interpretation of performative speech acts, writes, "a standard act depends as much upon the possibility of being repeated, and thus potentially of being mimed, feigned, cited, played, simulated, parasited, etc., as the latter possibility depends upon the possibility said to be opposed to it."⁷⁶ Just like standard and "deviant" utterances, imagined spaces and experienced spaces cannot be separated into fake/real or mimed/actual. The performative production of a space is always necessarily inherent in the "truth" of a space; ideas of place actually influence the production of space.

Importantly, the fact that memorial places *as* performative spaces are iterable means that there is room for slippage and conscious transgression within the production and imagining of these spaces. Each individual who performs acts of travel or placemaking repeats the ritualized performances that endow a space with meaning. However, everyone who performs such acts will interact with the space in slightly (or immensely) different ways: repetitions with differences. The iterability of performances of placemaking allows the memorial narratives embodied by a particular site to be deconstructed through tourist performances. Although she is using the term "performative space" in a slightly different way than I am, Erika Fischer-Lichte nevertheless identifies this possibility for rupture as one of the most salient aspects of performative space:

The performative space opens up possibilities without defining how they will ultimately be used and realized. Moreover, the performative space can be employed in ways neither planned nor foreseeable. [...] The performative space is characterized by that very possibility of being used

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 91-2.

in unintended ways, even if some participants [consider] such an unpredictable use inappropriate and infuriating.⁷⁷

At historic tourist sites, these “unpredictable uses” can be interpretations and performances of the site that are contrary to curatorial intentions or even outside the bounds of “accepted” memorial behaviors. Although curators and administrators of, and many visitors to, memorial sites may become frustrated by the touristic agency engendered by performative spaces, the possibility of challenges to hegemonic narratives remains very present and necessary.

Performative spaces are comprised of an infinite multiplicity of individual experiences yet continue to be structured by agreed-upon social performances that define and delineate communities. Performative space relies upon non-linear conceptions of time, which complicate easy narratives of national celebration and progress. Tracy C. Davis identifies the “citationality of performative time” thus: “though it is referential of linear events, it is crucially dependent upon nonlinear conceptions of existence over time, and in time, stretching into a relationship with times-to-come.”⁷⁸ Performative space is likewise dependent upon the interplay of linear narrative and nonlinear ideas of place as capable of representing multiple time periods or historical events at once. Because of this dependency, however, performative space is extremely susceptible to the kinds of ruptures that Derrida and Butler identify as inherent and potentially libratory. The intentional and unintentional slippages caused by the citationality of performative time and space “[call] attention to the question of who has agency to convey history, as well as

⁷⁷ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 108.

⁷⁸ Tracy C. Davis, “Performative Time,” in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 152.

how evidence for history is generated,” thus opening the possibility for a spatially and performatively centered reevaluation of the production of history.⁷⁹

Ghosted Towns

This dissertation explores the particular kinds of performative space that are produced and circulated at three distinct memorial places in the United States: Tombstone, Arizona; Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; and Nauvoo, Illinois. The subjects of the chapters represent discrete historical moments, US identities, and unique communities that have been defined by their association with geographical and imagined spaces. Although the sites examined are not, on the surface, connected, they are linked covalently through the bonds of the ideological structures and placemaking performances that situate them in the center of the imaginative geography of the United States; each represents identifiable moments and currents in the imagined, performed, and geographical histories that have shaped the conception of US “American-ness.”

In order to parse the entanglements of performance and the production of space at memorial places, the chapters consider the spatial strategies, stated and performed intentions, and directed narratives of those who control the tourist site; they also examine the tactics and possibilities for tourists to resist those strategies, intentions, and narratives. It should be noted here that, as the author of this project, my views and experiences invariably influence the conclusions to which I come. Therefore, I work to situate myself as what Ruth Behar calls a “vulnerable observer”: a scholar who is involved in the object of her study, and whose arguments

⁷⁹ Ibid., 161.

are complicated by that intimate, personal interaction between observer and observed.⁸⁰ This is not a project of autoethnography, but as it is focused on individual performances and experiences, it is unavoidably flavored by my own phenomenological engagement with each site.

Tombstone, Arizona, is presented in brochures, on highway billboards, and in blog posts as a direct embodiment of a romanticized “Wild West” past. Nicknamed “the town too tough to die,” its very provenance as an unlikely mining town and stubborn refusal to disappear speaks to the tenacity and can-do spirit that typifies mediated depictions of the Old West in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Chapter One examines the performative space created by the interaction of tourists, history buffs, and residents and argues that the town functions more like a movie set than a historical recreation: focusing on the performance genealogy of mourning, the ways that celebrity and iconicity have determined perceptions of the West, the proliferation and influence of “gun culture” in Old West tourist towns, and the romanticized disappearance of indigenous peoples. It argues that these disparate, though related, representations of the West come together in today’s Tombstone to create an embodied yet mythological interpretation of the “lawless” days on the receding frontier.

In Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, the class and racial tensions that froth below the landscape of Tombstone ooze up onto the surface and demand to be addressed. The official website of Colonial Williamsburg invites visitors to “Be part of the story” in this Revolutionary-era town; Chapter Two evaluates the roles that are available to performers and visitors of color, asks how black people are encouraged and permitted to “be part of the story,” and looks

⁸⁰ Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

specifically at the ways that “black experience[s]” are interpreted at the site.⁸¹ Although the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has, since the early 1970s, paid increased attention to minority and “other” histories, the implementation of these histories has been incomplete and haphazard at best. The fractured performative space at the site—which embodies a tension between celebratory patriotism and the shame of admitting the role that slavery played in the town’s growth and prominence—engenders complicated performances for and by visitors. The chapter argues that several forces—the use of progressive historiography, an investment in archives, an uneven focus on material culture, the metaphorical and geographical isolation of black histories, and the scriptive roles made available to black performers and visitors—work in concert to marginalize and de-materialize black experience, thus producing and circulating a primarily patriotic, celebratory, and white-focused narrative of the Revolutionary-era colonies.

Chapter Three considers the position and influence of “the sacred” in the production and circulation of performative space through an examination of Nauvoo and Carthage, Illinois, two pilgrimage sites for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon or LDS). Nauvoo was the apex of pre-Utah Mormon pioneer life and representative of a period in the Church’s history when the Saints (as members called themselves) lived under a veritable theocracy led by Joseph Smith; Carthage was the site of the murders of Joseph and his brother Hyrum (also an influential Church elder). As memorial sites, Nauvoo and Carthage embody the

⁸¹ The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Colonial Williamsburg Official Site, accessed 2 April 2010, <http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/>. Harvey Young writes that the term “black experience” is not meant to imply “that all black people have the same experience,” but “that a remarkable similarity, a repetition with a difference exists among embodied black experiences.” These “moments of experiential overlap frequently create common and, perhaps, shared understandings among black folk of the *similar* ways in which they are viewed and treated within society despite their differences from one another.” Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 5.

contested nature of sacred space, both literally and figuratively. Within Nauvoo, the contemporary LDS Church contends with an early offshoot of Smith's Church, the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or RLDS) over the actual land and the meaning of Nauvoo's sacred places. Through an examination of Smith's controversial doctrines that were revealed to members in Nauvoo, the politics and performances of prophetic surrogation, the rituals of pilgrimage, and the haunted nature of ancestral genealogy and the genealogies of performance that generate the sacred, this chapter argues that, at the site, space functions performatively to invoke and challenge various histories of "sacredness" within what has been called an "American" religion.

It is not my claim that these narratives are the only ways in which these respective sites can be understood; rather, this dissertation strives to develop a method for making intelligible some of the spatial and performance strategies that have been established at memorial places; the ways in which performative space embodies and circulates the cultural memory that is performed, marshaled, and resisted there; and the possible tactics which visitors can engage in order to challenge, rewrite, and reperform the national narratives embodied by these particular performative spaces.

I have chosen to use historical tourist sites as case studies not because they are the only, or the most closely connected, examples of performative space. I have selected them, instead, because they are microcosmic memorial spaces, often with clear institutional goals and preferences and with a vested interest in producing and circulating certain national and historical narratives through performance and performative space. They likewise have clear subsets of visitors who also have personal vested interests in the particular tellings of history and who span

the spectrum of response from complete acquiescence to absolute antagonism, providing a helpful multiplicity of interactions to consider. At each site, the stakes are incredibly high for all involved in producing both space and history through performance; if visitors stop attending the site, and it becomes no longer profitable (whether economically or in the circulation of historical and spiritual ideals), it will cease to exist. Thus each site is reacting to an implied mandate to “be operational...or disappear.”⁸² What must be operational is the performative space that invokes the “proper” or “correct” history—though what is proper or correct changes with each visitor. What will disappear are the stories and performative spaces of curators, visitors, US Americans who believe their history must be preserved in order to have actually existed—and thus the spatial and performed contestations go on, producing memorial places and spaces through these struggles.

These three sites are “ghosted towns,” locations that are haunted by the pasts that they simultaneously embody and endeavor to erase. Like the other ghost towns, these sites function as mnemonic aids to the past, offering a faint outline of the actual events that marked and defined them, but waiting for a visitor’s imagination and presence to invest them with *real* meaning.

⁸² Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), xxiv.

Chapter 1

A Town “Too Tough to Die”: Performing the Mythic West in Tombstone, Arizona

“The real story of the Old West can never be told,” Bat said, “unless Wyatt Earp will tell you what he knows, and Wyatt will not talk.”
—Stuart N. Lake, Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal

What old Tombstone did have for a few short years was life—loud, roaring, and bawdy—and pyrotechnic people. Alas, how does one rebuild or recreate them? If the Tombstoners know how to do that, they have something.
—*The New York Times*, January 24, 1950

The West, historian Richard White argues, is the “most strongly *imagined* section of the United States.” This imagining, he claims, derives from both local experience and national yearnings, and is largely based on a complex mythology embodied by “The West” as an idea and an imaginary location.¹ The mythology of the West, which fetishizes extreme individuality, rugged self-determination, casual violence, indeterminate racism, uncomplicated masculinity, and vast space emerged from and promulgated a mid- to late-nineteenth century nostalgia for North America’s disappearing land, which was being eaten up by encroaching civilization.²

¹ Richard White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”: *A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 613, 615-17.

² This landscape of the “mythology of the West” is well-explored scholarly territory. For further treatments of the subject, see Robert Athearn, *The Mythic West in Twentieth Century America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas,

Prodded first by exaggerated tales of bravery and survival circulated in newspapers and dime novels and later by new developments in photography, US citizens who lived both in and outside of the West envisioned the region as a paradoxical space that was simultaneously disappearing yet infinitely vast.

White and other scholars are careful to point out that the “real” West and the imagined West are not binary opposites; rather the two, together, create a composite West that is both a physical reality and an imagined geography.³ Within this composite, actual people live and work, travel and play, but are constantly influenced by imagined spatial maps that shape and determine their interactions with the land, its history, and its meaning within US popular culture. These spatial maps, which are both layered on and actually create the territory which they depict, are an accretion of past performances, ideas, images, sounds, and experiences that signify “West,” and they are simultaneously individual and representative of communal and cultural memories.

In this chapter, I explore contemporary Tombstone, Arizona, as a potent spatial and performative example of the US West as it exists physically, geographically, and mythically, both in the landscape of the United States and in US cultural memory. Tombstone’s curators—local government officials, business owners, and entertainers—strive to touch the past, but that past is less a historical actuality than a theatrical recreation of a mythic imagining. I am careful here, however, of reaffirming a binary between reality and theatricality; instead, I hope to locate

1986); Richard Aquila, ed. *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998); David H. Murdoch, *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2001); Jane Kramer, *The Last Cowboy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); William Savage, Jr., *The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985); and Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West in Symbol and Myth* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957).

³ White, “It’s Your Misfortune,” 614.

Tombstone geographically and imaginatively in a liminal space where performance *is* reality and there is precious little distance between what is imagined and what is experienced. Tombstone is certainly a theatricalized space, but, as Rebecca Schneider artfully claims, “there’s nothing mere about the theatrical, and moreover, theatricality, like interpretation, is not a matter of the *loss* of some prior, purer *actual*. Rather, in line with Aristotle’s rejoinder to Plato, mimesis is what we *do*.”⁴ If Tombstone is theatrical and mimetic, that certainly does not make it any less real, nor its representations of the imagined past of the West any less affecting.

The recreation of past lives, events, and spaces lies at the very heart of historical tourism, an activity which finds its genesis and meaning in the hope that spatial embodiment can lead to a greater connection with and understanding of the past. Formal and informal performances are central elements of this recreation, and actors and reenactors stand in for those “pyrotechnic people” who have long since passed from memory into myth. In contemporary Tombstone, the gunslingers, cowboys, and lawmen that made the town famous appear daily, walking the streets and reenacting the events that have provided material for aesthetic representations of the West, performing ghostly materializations of past lives. Though both the “original” space and the people who once inhabited it have long since slipped into myth, tourists continue to flock to Tombstone, hoping that a spatial encounter with this historical site will call forth an embodied memory that has seeped from the history of the American West as it is presented in books, on movie screens, and on the stage. The site itself dismantles what Schneider has called “the *habit* of linear time” and piles the present and the future on top of and within the past, challenging a simple progression of history. The site offers visitors a feeling of spatial and temporal

⁴ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 18. Emphasis in the original.

displacement; at such sites, history does not stay in the past. Rather, the site utilizes and engages with a “performative” conceptualization of time, one which presents “a history of the future...citationally linked to the past rather than unfolding from it in successive time or memory.”⁵ I argue that such locations are likewise “performative” spaces, sites that are “citationally linked” to their pasts.

Tombstone is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States, one of a crop of celebrated Old West towns (Bodie, California; Deadwood, South Dakota; and Dodge City, Kansas round out the top four most visited) that have parlayed a historical reputation for wild and woolly ways into a lucrative tourist draw. Tourism represents a significant revenue stream for Tombstone, an old mining town of roughly 1700 residents, many of whom work in the hospitality industry. Located near the Mexican border in southeastern Arizona, the town’s claim to fame rests on being the location of the infamous shootout at the O.K. Corral, a thirty-second gun battle that has entered the US cultural lexicon as a representative of the western trope of the struggle between law and chaos. Tombstone’s tourist appeal derives chiefly from its ability to recreate the spatio-performative experience of the Wild West, which residents and business owners accomplish by constructing and maintaining performative spaces and engaging in formal and informal performances of “Western” identity.

In this chapter, I examine Tombstone as a tourist site that both traffics *in* and functions *as* performance. Paraphrasing communications scholar Richard Bauman, Marvin Carlson offers the following elucidation of performance’s most important elements:

⁵ Tracy C. Davis, “Performative Time,” in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 150.

All performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, according to which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action...central to this phenomenon [performance] is the sense of an action carried out *for* someone, an action involved in the peculiar doubling that comes with consciousness and with the elusive other that performance is not but which it constantly struggles in vain to embody.⁶

In Tombstone, embodied and spatial performances, including funeral and gunfight reenactments, openly carrying deadly weapons, photographic witnessing, being in the landscape, and Old West *flânerie*, are colonized and repeated to advance a citational embodiment of a mythologized Wild West. This process of reproduction and recreation represents the struggle to performatively replace a lost and possibly imaginary time: in this case, the hyper-violent and romantically individualistic period of the gunslinger.

Throughout my analysis, I argue that the curators of tourist locations in Tombstone (particularly members of the town council, owners of the O.K. Corral, and proprietors of the Allen Street businesses) utilize performance and spatial production in order to “make real” the mythic West and draw visitors into the past as it is represented by these spaces. Drawing on Michel de Certeau’s theories of strategic power and tactical resistance, I also claim that, regardless of the desires and intentions of these curators, tourists nevertheless have significant levels of agency in determining their personal spatial and performative encounters with the town. This chapter considers the role of space and performance in both the construction of the national

⁶ Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.

myth of the “Wild” West and the power that myth continues to exert over the US imagination, and contends that the performative space created through various tourist performances in Tombstone often serves to normalize and obscure certain culturally constructed “truths” about the American West. I do, however, leave room for touristic agency, and argue, somewhat counterintuitively, that these same spaces and performances can equip tourists with the tools to contest and challenge the myth itself.

I trace the architecture of this myth alongside the tourist performances that support and contest it, weaving historical inquiry with an analysis of the performative space that typifies contemporary Tombstone. First, I explore the performance of mourning and funeral reenactments and how these performances serve to reify the image of Tombstone as a town marked by violence. Next, I consider the ways in which Tombstone has become an ideal *mise-en-scène* for performances of US gun culture, typified by the scenario of the gunfight that characterizes Tombstone’s formal performances and by informal tourist performances of openly carrying deadly weapons. I then take up the question of iconicity, interrogating how Wyatt Earp and Tombstone have both become celebrity surfaces upon which tourists project their own expectations and desires. The next section examines the role of disappearance in conceptions of the West and explores how tropes of vanishing influence both the myth of the West and tourist expectations. Finally, I consider walking as a radical tourist performance that challenges curatorial strategies, empowering tourists and allowing them to construct their own performative spaces of the US West.

Though its boom time was short (roughly six years),⁷ Tombstone has loomed large in the cultural consciousness because of its continuing reputation as a gunslinger's haunt, and today tourists flock to the town that labels itself "too tough to die."⁸ Indeed, the town has fared remarkably well by marketing itself as a location where one can step back into history and experience the West back when it was Wild. Of course, the town is a simulacrum of its former self; visitors can no more easily step back in history in Tombstone than they can in New York City. Tombstone's designation of itself as a historical city, then, can only occur *because* it is impossible to salvage the actual memory of the Wild West. Instead of a reproduction of an actual historical era, Tombstone becomes an embodied representation of a mediatized myth that continues to exert great influence over the US imaginary. Much like the colonial and revolutionary periods represented by Colonial Williamsburg and the evangelical fervor of westward expansion inherent in Nauvoo, the time of romantic Western lawlessness that Tombstone embodies marks a formative time in US history and a remarkably salient strand of the national imaginary.

Tombstone, like other historical tourist sites, is not simply an empty sound stage for touristic play. Nor is it a site directly and uncritically connected to the past. Instead, drawing on Jacques Derrida's famous formulation, it functions as a "supplement" to the past, simultaneously a fulfillment of that past and a replacement of it.⁹ Spaces like Tombstone, and the performances

⁷ At its peak, Tombstone was home to some 15,000 people and had an ice cream parlor and ice-skating rink (rather remarkable luxuries for a desert town). By 1900, however, the US Census put the population of Tombstone at 646 inhabitants. *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington: U.S. Census Office, 1902).

⁸ An estimated 500,000 tourists visit Tombstone each year—roughly 300 tourists for every permanent resident. "Helldorado: Tombstone, Arizona," accessed October 5, 2010, <http://www.helldoradodays.com>.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, corr. ed. (1976; repr., Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 144, 200.

featured there, enact an ambivalent function in the preservation and circulation of historical experience; it is never quite clear whether the site, as supplement, “adds itself, ... is a surplus, a plentitude enriching another plentitude, the *fullest measure* of presence [that] cumulates and accumulates presence,” or whether “the supplement supplements... adds only to replace [and] intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*... fills... as if one fills a void.”¹⁰ Ultimately, Derrida argues, supplementarity is a process that includes both “substitution and accretion,” and the two cannot be divided.¹¹ At historical tourist sites such as Tombstone, this process is manifest in both the space, which is ever-changing through development, destruction, the influx and outflux of population, and shifting economics, and the daily performances of inhabitants and visitors. The site accretes as it moves through performative time and space; at the same time, it replaces and stands in for a past that, although affective and influential, is irrecoverable. Understanding the mythic dimension of the West, the interplay between fantasy and experience, and the ways that tourist destinations citationally draw on and supplant Wild West affect through space and performance is a necessary component of comprehending the politics of placemaking the US and the role that historical tourism fulfills in the creation, perpetuation, and circulation of cultural memory.

Performances of Mourning

Upon entering Tombstone, visitors drive up a slight incline and around a corner on AZ Highway 80; at the bend is an old, rusty wagon, painted black and professing to be a hearse,

¹⁰ Ibid., 144-45. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹ Ibid., 200. In his influential study *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Joseph Roach more completely adapts Derrida’s theory of supplementarity to performance and names the performative process of addition, erasure, and replacement *surrogation*.

parked across the street from the entrance of Boothill Graveyard. One of Tombstone’s main attractions, Boothill stands at the crest of the hill just beyond the city center and is filled with handpainted grave markers, some of which bear rather jarringly lighthearted puns (fig. 1.1).¹² Though spatially removed from the center of the town, Boothill is nevertheless ideologically central to the imaginary landscape of Tombstone, providing a material manifestation of the violence that marks both this small ex-mining town and the mythic Wild West. In fact, Tombstone’s Boothill is one of many Old West cemeteries that bear the same name, a reference to the gamblers and gunfighters buried there; men who, it was said, died “with their boots on”—that is, violently.

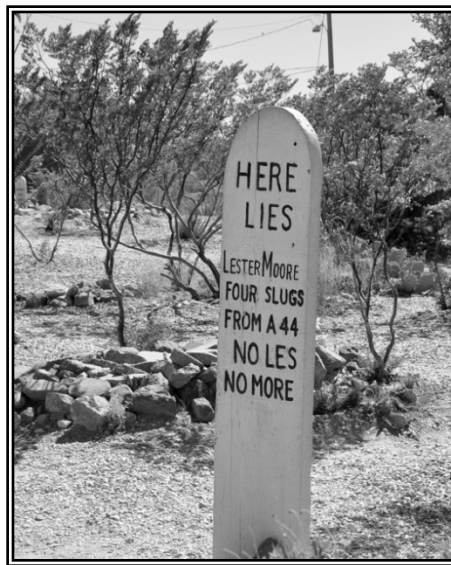


Figure 1.1: Grave of Lester Moore, Boothill Graveyard. The epitaph reads, “Here lies/Lester Moore/four slugs/from a 44/no Les/no more.” Tombstone, Arizona, May 16, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

¹² Some of these markers are almost certainly fake, or at least embellished to add punch to what is otherwise a typical Western graveyard. Nevertheless, the Boothill curators make no mention of veracity in their publication materials, leaving open the option that these graves and their markers are, indeed, real. Boothill Graveyard Guide and Map, Tombstone AZ, 2010.

Of the many graves located in Tombstone's Boothill Graveyard, some of the most visited and photographed are those of Billy Clanton and brothers Frank and Tom McLaury, the victims of the infamous gunfight at the O.K. Corral—the event that has inspired Tombstone's nationwide reputation (and self-branding) as the US town that epitomizes the violent romanticism of the Old West. Though institutionalized violence such as systematic programs of American Indian removal and wildlife eradication best characterizes the late frontier in the United States, a specific type of romantically aestheticized “gunslinger” violence has deeply influenced interpretations and representations of the Wild West, especially at Old West tourist sites like Tombstone. While it is true that many frontier towns were dangerous places and that firearms were common, such towns were rarely lawless (or not for long, anyway), as the monied interests that inevitably poured into western boomtowns had clear motivations for ensuring the safety of potential customers.¹³ This general intolerance of violence within city limits is seldom portrayed in mediatized versions of the West, however, and a glorification of “justified” violence is everywhere present in contemporary tourist Tombstone, which presents a compellingly blood-soaked version of history—especially in representations and reenactments of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral.

The incident at the O.K. Corral would bring infamy to Tombstone, but the town itself began as a hastily improvised mining camp, established after prospector Ed Shieffelin discovered

¹³ Indeed, the gun laws in place in Tombstone in 1881, the year of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral, were markedly stricter than current Arizona gun laws, which were amended in 2009 to allow citizens to carry weapons, openly or concealed, without a permit and which forbid city governments from putting any further limits on individual gun ownership. Arizona State Legislature, AZ Rev. Stat. §13-3101, accessed January 20, 2011, <http://www.azleg.state.az.us/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/13/03102.htm&Title=13&DocType=ARS>.

a lucrative silver vein in the desert of the Arizona Territory in 1879.¹⁴ Within two years, the town had blossomed from an obscure mining outpost into the cosmopolitan county seat of newly created Cochise County. Riding high on the wave of silver, it was a decadent place; in spite of being deep in the desert, it had an ice cream parlor and quickly filled with saloons and gambling houses. It was a fashionable, if rambunctious, frontier town, and, like many such places at that time, it attracted a great number of people in search of fortune and adventure. Among these seekers were Wyatt Earp and his brothers, who, in 1881, were participants in perhaps the most famous gunbattle in Western lore.

The shootout at the O.K. Corral was the culmination of tensions that had been mounting for years between the “Cow-boys,” ranchhands and cattle rustlers that lived outside city limits but came in to Tombstone to patronize the casinos and brothels, and the Earps, lawmen who saw the Cowboys as little more than thieves and delinquents.¹⁵ Tempers flared often in Tombstone, occasionally resulting in violence—a tendency which caused the city to enact a ban on all weapons within city limits; this statute was in effect at the time of the gunfight. Though the story changes slightly depending on who tells it, the rough scenario of the shootout remains the same:

¹⁴ “Tombstone” reflects the inhospitable nature of the land: Shieffelin gave the town its name as a reference to the warning that Al Sieber, a scout at a nearby military outpost, offered the prospector—that the only rock he would find out in the arid, Apache-controlled desert was his own tombstone. Walter Noble Burns, *Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1927), 5. For further sources on the founding of Tombstone and its existence as a mining town, see William B. Shillingberg, *Tombstone, A.T.: A History of Early Mining, Milling, and Mayhem* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1999); Frederick Bechdolt, *When the West Was Young* (New York: The Century Co., 1922); and John Myers Myers, *The Last Chance: Tombstone’s Early Years* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1950).

¹⁵ Though many residents saw the Cowboys as troublemakers, O.K. Corral historian Tim Fattig, among others, points out that not everyone in town disliked them. The young men, though often rowdy, were not all thieves and vagabonds; additionally, the money they brought to the town’s establishments was a lifeblood for merchants. Tim Fattig, “The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral (lecture, O.K. Corral, Tombstone, AZ, May 15, 2010). See also Casey Tefertiller, *Wyatt Earp: The Life Behind the Legend* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 41-2; and Paula Mitchell Marks, *And Die in the West: The Story of the O.K. Corral Gunfight* (New York: William Morrow, 1989), 93-5.

the Earps and the Cowboys had been squabbling for over two years, their minor fights representing the politically fraught disagreements between the wealthier Republicans in town and the poorer Southern Democrats that lived mostly on ranches outside the city limits. During this time, tensions mounted between the Earp faction, brothers Wyatt, Virgil, and Morgan and John Henry “Doc” Holliday, and the Clantons and McLaurys, ranchers from the area who were part of the Cowboy faction, as allegations and counter-allegations of horse thievery, stagecoach robbing, and bribery were traded back and forth.

The gunfight itself was the climax, but by no means the end, of this accusational flurry. During the week leading up to the fight, the Earps and Holliday had several run-ins with Ike Clanton and Tom McLaury. These minor disputes led to both Clanton and McLaury being “pistol-whipped” by the Earps as punishment for illegally carrying weapons in the town.¹⁶ Clanton’s and McLaury’s brothers each arrived in town on October 26 (Billy and Frank, respectively), and, along with Billy Claiborne, the four Cowboys clustered in the alley outside the O.K. Corral.

When he heard that the group was gathering on the edge of town, and that Billy Clanton, Frank McLaury, and Claiborne, flouting the city law, had not relinquished their weapons, city marshal Virgil Earp gathered Morgan, Wyatt, and Holliday and headed toward the alley where the cowboys were converging. It is unclear who fired first; the troubles leading up to the gunbattle were highly partisan, and the ensuing narratives of the fight were even more so. What is agreed upon is that Virgil Earp demanded the Cowboys surrender their guns, then someone

¹⁶ “Pistol-whipping” or “buffaloing” is when a revolver is used as a blunt-force instrument to strike a victim, usually on the head, with the barrel of the gun. This form of fighting, though rarely seen in Hollywood Westerns, was a much more common tool for maintaining order than using the revolver to shoot an offender. The Earps in particular were known to make prodigious use of this particular order-enforcing strategy. Tefertiller, 25.

fired. Roughly thirty seconds later, both McLaurys were dead and Billy Clanton lay dying; Virgil and Morgan Earp and Holliday were wounded. Wyatt Earp was unharmed, as were Ike Clanton and Billy Claiborne, both of whom fled during the gunfire.

Directly following the gun battle, the Earps and Holliday were viewed as heroes for thwarting the Cowboys. This unilateral support soon fractured, however, with the Clanton-McLaury funeral marking the dividing day. “While it was not entirely suspected,” the *Tombstone Nugget* wrote, “the funeral of Billy Clanton and Thomas and Frank McLowry [*sic*] yesterday was the largest ever witnessed in Tombstone.”¹⁷ Almost immediately, the town separated into factions: Earp supporters used the *Tombstone Epitaph* to mount a public defense of the Earps’ actions; Cowboy backers disseminated their side of the story aided by the *Nugget*. While Earp supporters argued that the marshal and his brothers were simply acting in self-defense against bloodthirsty rustlers, Cowboy defenders claimed Tom McLaury had been unarmed, and that the three victims were coolly slaughtered by the power-hungry lawmen.

In this atmosphere of partisan tumult, the funeral emerged as a performative dénouement of the shootout, allowing for the public mourning of the fight. According to historical accounts, the funeral seemed to be a solemn, respectful affair. The *Epitaph*, generally more supportive of the Earp version of the gunfight, described the spectacle of the funeral:

The funeral of the McLowry [*sic*] brothers and Clanton yesterday was numerically one of the largest ever witnessed in Tombstone. [...] The procession, headed by the Tombstone brass band, moved down Allen Street and thence to the cemetery. The sidewalks were densely packed for

¹⁷ *Tombstone Nugget*, October 28, 1881.

three or four blocks. The body of Clanton was in the first hearse and those of the two McLowry brothers in the second, side by side, and were interred in the same grave. It was a most impressive and saddening sight and such a one as it is to be hoped may never occur again in this community.¹⁸

This report emphasizes the performance of both mourning and motion: the streets were crowded with spectators, there to witness the conflict's movement from centrality to periphery. Leading up the funeral, the victims' bodies were displayed in the local undertaker's window, occupying a spatially dominant position in the town (fig. 1.2). The only indication of the bitterness seething throughout the town was a banner that hung above the bodies while they lay in view. Reading "murdered on the streets of Tombstone," the accusatory placard that followed the bodies in the funeral procession and was then transferred to the wooden gravemarker identifying the Clanton-McLaury plot in Boothill (fig. 1.3).

In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach explores the spatial and performed meanings of cemeteries in modern towns and cities, suggesting that they function as what he terms "vortices of behavior"—spaces that he compares to Pierre Nora's *lieux*. Roach explains that these vortices "canalize specified needs, desires, and habits in order to reproduce them"—in the case of graveyards, what is directed is the need for public mourning that is visible but nevertheless removed from the center of everyday life.¹⁹ Cemeteries, then, perform as

¹⁸ "The Funeral," *Tombstone Epitaph*, October 28, 1881. Quoted in Pat Jahns, *The Frontier World of Doc Holliday* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1979), 186-87.

¹⁹ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 28.



Figure 1.2: Bodies of Tom McLaury, Frank McLaury, and Billy Clanton. Tombstone, Arizona, October 27, 1881. Photograph by C.S. Fly. Arizona Historical Society.



Figure 1.3: “Murdered on the Streets of Tombstone.” Boothill Graveyard, Tombstone, Arizona, May 16, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

architectural markers between life and death, or living and dying, giving physical emphasis to liminal border between the two. For towns in the Old West, this was a particularly important function. Though the towns were not nearly as deadly as films and dime novels would have us believe, they were nevertheless places where the possibility and even probability of violence were constantly simmering under the surface of a fragile social organization, making the regulatory role graveyards and funerals played a vital one. By separating mourning from the everyday, funerary spaces and rituals allowed room both spatially and performatively for the outpouring of grief without such performances necessarily turning into violence, and promoted the continuation of the current social order. Although the infighting between supporters of the Earps and those of the Cowboys continued for many months, for the town at large, the funeral represented a performed attempt to usher the ill-feelings outside the town borders: literally, to segregate and bury the conflict.

The practice of segregating the dead from the living, Roach argues, reached its most ambitious stage in the Enlightenment project of quarantining the material remains of the dead into locations removed from the city center: into so-called “Cities of the Dead.” Before this undertaking, the dead and living were expected to co-mingle; “indeed,” he suggests, “one of the most important elements that gave meaning to a particular place—that made it a particular place—was the gregarious presence of the dead.”²⁰ The separation of the living from the dead challenged the long-held superstitions and understandings of these ghostly presences, geographically affirming a rational distance between the two and reasserting the social order. In locations such as Tombstone, however, the ghosts of past inhabitants are not so easily

²⁰ Ibid., 49-50.

segregated, regardless of the location of their final resting place. The “gregarious presence” of Tombstone’s famous dead is, in fact, what continues to give this particular place meaning (and marketability).

While in everyday life cemeteries serve to spatially locate and direct mourning, in historical tourism they perform slightly different functions which vary from site to site. Gravesites that mark some historical events are, indeed, sacred and provide a physical manifestation for mourning; in particular, sites along the Trail of Tears or at Wounded Knee in the US perform the specific role of facilitating personal mourning, largely because few official tourist sites have been built to commemorate the graves. Likewise, a national cemetery such as Arlington, though it is an official tourist site, encourages visitors to engage in individual memorial performances. In Old West towns like Tombstone, however, the graveyard rarely functions as a site for mourning; rather, it operates as one more location of historical curiosity, on par with museums and preserved architecture. It is doubtful that most visitors to Tombstone have any deep sadness about the deaths of the McLaurys and Billy Clanton—the victims of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral—and yet, their graves are among the most visited and photographed in the graveyard. This seems less like mourning and more like an aspect of what Michal Kobińska refers to as “the prestige of *this happened*.”²¹ The graves are not for mourning; rather, they are material evidence of the reality of the gunfight, which, in turn, acts as performative evidence of an exotically violent national past. Tourists utilize the graveyard as a way to connect with the past, performing a geneological link to history by visiting and photographing the space.

²¹ Michal Kobińska, “Historical Events and the Historiography of Tourism,” *Journal of Theatre and Drama* 2 (1996): 158.

Staged periodically in Tombstone, reenactments of the Clanton-McLaury funeral serve different functions for participants and spectators. For participants, many of whom are residents of Tombstone, these reenactments balance a need for commemoration or actual historical mourning with a desire to make the past real through performance and lure tourists to the site. Functioning as second-person interpreters rather than traditional actors, these participants engage in performances that enable them to connect “with the material existences of their counterparts in the past.”²² Indeed, for reenactor Terry “Ike” Clanton, a descendant of the Tombstone Clantons, the funeral reenactment performed on the 125th anniversary of the gun battle was “so real you could feel the emotions.”²³ Such deep connection is not unusual for participants in reenactments, especially those who, like Clanton, have a personal attachment to the history being performed.

Spectacles such as reenacted funerals are, like all performances, each unique. However, also like all performances, these reenactments utilize structures of behavior to make themselves intelligible to an audience (and to the performers, for that matter). The mourning that is performed is an example of Schechner’s “restored behavior,” which he characterizes as transmittable behaviors that are repetitions (or restorations) of an “original” behavior, the origins of which “may be unknown or concealed; elaborated; distorted by myth and tradition.” Schechner continues: “Performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*th time. Performance is ‘twice-behaved behavior.’”²⁴ Performances of mourning are restored behaviors, predicated upon centuries of regulated behavior—certain vocal expressions,

²² Scott Magelssen, “‘This is a Drama. You Are Characters’: The Tourist as Fugitive Slave in Connor Prairie’s ‘Follow the North Star,’” *Theatre Topics* 16.1 (March 2006): 20.

²³ Terry “Ike” Clanton, “O.K. Corral Gunfight,” TombstoneArizona.com, The Clanton Gang, accessed February 10, 2011, <http://www.clantongang.com/oldwest/gunfight.html>.

²⁴ Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35, 36.

movements, and props are necessary to communicate a behaved shorthand for “grief” in the Western world. In a photograph of the reenactment, two performers epitomize the restored behavior of grief: dressed in black and wielding handkerchiefs, rosaries, and pictures of the deceased, the women assume a pose that communicates funereal mourning, dabbing at their eyes and supporting one another (fig. 1.4). The restored behavior represents a bodily architecture that presents sorrow, making the emotions intelligible for both performers and spectators, even though neither participant has a direct or personal connection to the deceased, who are, after all, historical figures long since dead and almost entirely unknowable. Nevertheless, as with all history and all performance, repetition produces recognition. “The spectacle of death,” Diana Taylor suggests, “elicits the specters of the already there. We’re moved because we already know the story.”²⁵

For many spectators of these reenactments, however, the experience is necessarily altered. Tourists may approach the reenactment as a performance or as a touristic-historical curiosity, or both. Each approach creates a different dialectical tension between the reenactors, who are performing mourning, and the spectators, who are often less personally invested yet required to participate emotionally in order to make the reenactment successful. While it is certainly true that, as Scott Magelssen argues, “living bodies in the present promise a more ‘real experience of the past than what visitors would get from viewing a collection of historic objects,” reenacting a funeral is more complicated than other, more common forms of living history, such as engaging in historical games or performing period tasks.²⁶ And though it would be incorrect to

²⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 149.

²⁶ Magelssen, “This is a Drama,” 20.

suggest that other reenactments or forms of living history do not powerfully affect visitors' emotions, it is nevertheless undeniable that, for a funeral reenactment to be affective, it must tap into common emotional patterns, especially those of public mourning and historical context, that require not only physical but also emotional cooperation from performers and spectators.



Figure 1.4: Mourners at Clanton-McLaury Funeral Reenactment. Tombstone, Arizona, October 28, 2006. Photograph by Terry “Ike” Clanton.

Because of this participatory requirement, funereal reenactments such as those staged in Tombstone to commemorate the victims of the shootout at the O.K. Corral are fluid, multifaceted performances that have no set meaning—their function and purpose is created in the flow between performer intent and spectator desire. As with other types of touristic performance, the reenactment of the funeral opens up an area for tourists to assert their own experiences and beliefs—to utilize tactics of meaning making in the face of mediatized and curatorial strategies that attempt to structure and guide the historical narrative. Spectators can decide their level of

participation, where they stand in relation to the performers, and how they respond to overt or implied calls to participate in the recreation. Spectators are interpellated by the performance as either for or against the Earps, partially determining their interaction with the history and the performance. By choosing whose side they are on, spatially and performatively, spectators become spect-actors, creating a personal, embodied history. Reenactments of the Clanton-McLaury funeral necessarily factionalize viewers spatially and performatively, forcing them to become more personally and emotionally involved in performances of mourning and guilt being staged while simultaneously offering them both spatial and performative options to determine their own touristic and historic experience.

Scenarios and Scriptives: Performing Gun Culture

While reenactments of the Clanton-McLaury funeral are staged only on rare occasions (the last was in 2006, on the 125th anniversary of the shootout), reenactments of the gunfight itself are performed frequently. The best-known and attended reenactment, “Tombstone’s Main Event: A Tragedy at the O.K. Corral,” is performed at the O.K. Corral one to three times per day, every day of the year (including holidays) and often sells out during peak season.²⁷ In addition to “Tombstone’s Main Event” at the O.K. Corral, several other companies and sites in town recreate the shootout and other gunfights, including the saloon and restaurant Six Gun City, and at least one company that stages “comedy gun fights.”²⁸ Each of these gunfight reenactments draws on mnemonic patterns that establish certain rules regarding the structure of a gun battle

²⁷ Stephen Keith, interview with the author, Tombstone, AZ, May 15, 2010.

²⁸ “Shows and Performances,” Tombstone Chamber of Commerce, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://www.tombstonechamber.com/Shows-and-Performances>.

and is constructed by mediatized representations of such fights; these patterns are what make the gun battles intelligible to spectators.

The Wild West gunfight has become a performance trope, an example of what Diana Taylor has termed a *scenario*. Positioning the scenario as an alternative to history's traditional reliance on texts and narratives, Taylor suggests that it functions as an "act of transfer," a kind of embodied communication of knowledge outside the textual and the narrative. It is, she continues, "a paradigm that is formulaic, portable, repeatable, and often banal because it leaves out complexity, reduces conflict to its stock elements, and encourages fantasies of participation."²⁹ The gunfight, especially as it is enacted in Tombstone, functions in just such a way: it follows the same formula at every enactment, is transferrable between types of media, remains endlessly repeatable, turns complex arguments into battles between good and evil, and invites spectators to fantasize that they, too, can solve their problems with the shot of a single, well-placed bullet.

Scenarios, Taylor explains, differ from textual narratives in the way that they allow the body to influence the story being told and, perhaps, even the social outcome of the performance. "Scenarios, like narrative, grab the body and insert it into a frame. The body in the scenario, however, has space to maneuver because it is not scripted. [...] The scenario more fully allows us to keep both the social actor and the role in view simultaneously and thus recognize the uneasy fits and areas of tension."³⁰ The scenario of the gunfight, as performed daily in Tombstone, acts as an embodiment of the mythic West and its overabundant violence, a repeatable trope that levels complexity and structures the space of the tourist encounter.

²⁹ Taylor, 54.

³⁰ Ibid., 55.

Simultaneously, however, the gunfight scenario allows for a rupturing of mythic and historical space by encouraging audience participation and emphasizing the tension between the [social] actor and the role, spotlighting the slippage between the individual playing Earp and the received image of the lawman as an icon.

A long line of previous gun battles ghosts the gunfight scenario; it is twice-behaved behavior, what Carlson has called “the identical thing [we] have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context.”³¹ However, it is not gun battles themselves that construct the gunfight scenario; rather, it is the mediated representations of these fights. Based on over a century of performed scenarios, Western gunfights repeat several primary actions each time they are presented. First, a hero and a villain have a disagreement, usually over the villain’s antisocial and criminal behavior. Generally, this disagreement results in the hero issuing an ultimatum: the villain must desist (and usually leave the town) or else face the hero’s administration of justice. Unsurprisingly, in the scenario the villain never changes his behavior—and he rarely leaves.

The villain’s refusal to abide by the hero’s admonition results in the confrontation. In the matter of setting, this confrontation usually happens on a hazy main street in a dusty Western town; the hero and the villain alike are rugged, hyper-masculine figures, though the villain is dirty and unkempt, while the hero’s “spotless attire looks like an externalization of his character.”³² The two men then banter, taunting one another and appearing unfazed in the face of certain death (this is the moment when Ennio Morricone’s theme to *The Good, the Bad, and the*

³¹ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 7.

³² Andreas Liesner, “Law and (Dis)Order: The Janus-Faced Myth of the Lawman in U.S. History and Popular Culture,” in *Legal Narratives*, ed. Gudrun M. Grabher and Anna Gamper (Nördlingen, Germany: SpringerWienNewYork, 2009), 102.

Ugly would begin to play, its mournful whistle signaling the villain's impending doom). Finally, there is the quick draw, followed by several shots, and black powder smoke envelops the scene. At this point in the scenario, it is officially too early to tell who won the draw, but one may rest assured that the hero will still be standing when the smoke finally clears. These elements remain the same each time the scenario is enacted, and this citationality makes the scenario intelligible; because these details are present, spectators know that what is being presented is a Wild West gunfight.

The gunfights staged in Tombstone are ghosted not only by the infamous battle that established the town as a must-see destination, but also by the many popular depictions of that gunfight and others, especially in film. The actual gunfight at the O.K. Corral took place not at the Corral itself, but just outside it, on Fremont Street. Although many representations of the shootout depict the location as spatially wide open (fig. 1.5), the actual site was quite constrained. The owners of the O.K. Corral have made some efforts to represent the spatial configuration of the fight more accurately, including the installation of animatronics that stand in the exact spots of the participants and “wake up” and commence the gunfight upon the press of a button (fig. 1.6). “Tombstone's Main Event,” however, takes its spatial cues not from the animatronics but from the cinema, placing the actors on a dusty main street in front of several saloons and hotels rather than in a cramped alley behind a corral (fig. 1.7).



Figure 1.5: The smoke clears. Film still from *My Darling Clementine*, directed by John Ford, 1946.



Figure 1.6: Animatronics at the O.K. Corral Gunfight Site. This configuration depicts the actual positions of participants at the outset of the gunfight, as described by Wyatt Earp. Tombstone, Arizona, May 15, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.



Figure 1.7: "Tombstone's Main Event." The gunfight begins in front of reproductions of C.S. Fly's studio, the Oriental Saloon, and the Tombstone Epitaph building; of these, only Fly's studio was actually near the gunfight site. Tombstone, Arizona, May 15, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

Through over a century of mediatized portrayals, the gunfight at the O.K. Corral has emerged as a scenario that represents the myth of the “righteous” pursuit of vigilante justice, and it is a constant presence in Tombstone, manifest through both textual (guidebooks, historical displays and plaques) and performed materials (reenactments and historical lectures). The gunfight scenario that pits right against wrong and obscures any gray area has also influenced the sphere of public policy debates, allowing participants in such debates to utilize the scenario, and the reenactments it inspires, as a field upon which the various interests in the town enact their disagreements and struggles over the spatio-performative remembering that happens at historical sites throughout the town. One of the primary disagreements is over who has the right to perform the reenactment of the gunfight in the space of the corral and, thus, who controls the dissemination of cultural memory as it is enacted for hundreds of tourists every day.

The first recorded reenactment of the fight took place in 1929, at the first Helldorado celebration.³³ Town officials staged the celebration as an opportunity for former residents of Tombstone to return and relive the town’s boomtown days; though Earp was invited, he did not attend. As part of the festivities, a reenactment of the O.K. Corral gunfight was staged on Fremont Street, in the exact spot of the original altercation. John Clum, founder and publisher of the *Tombstone Epitaph* and lifelong friend of Earp, failed to see the value in such a spectacle:

The mock street battle between the city police and the rustlers was a grim exhibition that should have been omitted. The spectacle of men engaged in mortal combat is repulsive and distressing. It is inconceivable that any

³³ Allegedly, an unlucky miner who had come to Tombstone in search of his fortune coined this name. He remarked that while he had hoped to find his “Eldorado” of riches, he instead found a “Helldorado” of menial labor and poverty. “Helldorado Days,” Helldorado: Tombstone, Arizona, accessed October 14, 2010, <http://www.helldoradodays.com>.

normal spectator derived either pleasure or benefit from viewing the mock battle. The lamentable clash between the city police and the rustlers on October 26, 1881, occasioned more partisan bitterness than anything else that ever occurred in that community—and traces of that bitterness linger to this day. There was no justification for the inclusion of that gruesome act in the HELLDORADO program, and, in my judgment, the mock street fight was reprehensible—even from a HELLDORADO standpoint.³⁴

Clum was clearly much closer emotionally to the fight itself and the pain and sorrow it generated in the town in 1881. From a contemporary perspective, it is ironic to read that Clum believed that no “normal spectator” would derive benefit from the reenactment, since today, plenty of “normal” spectators travel to Tombstone specifically to see such a spectacle.

In spite of Clum’s expectations, the reenactment was actually a success then as well, and the town held a handful of subsequent Helldorado celebrations over the next several years. It wasn’t until 1971, however, that the owners of the O.K. Corral^{®35} decided to start performing the reenactment regularly in an empty portion of the corral. This occurred when a group of mostly retired history enthusiasts called “The Wild Bunch,” who wanted to embody their Western heroes and recreate the spatial configuration of the fight, approached the owners for permission to perform private reenactments on the actual site of the original event. Soon, it became clear that

³⁴ Quoted in Bob Boze Bell, *Illustrated Life and Times of Wyatt Earp*, 4th ed. (Phoenix: Tri-Star – Boze Productions, 2000), 123.

³⁵ The name “O.K. Corral” is, indeed, a registered trademark.

the reenactment could serve as a tourist draw, and The Wild Bunch introduced an official program.³⁶

Though it appears to have been financially lucrative, this program ultimately proved only marginally popular; most complaints were that the performers simply were not good actors and were not believable in their roles. This is not a surprising reaction; the eldest of the participants in the historical fight was Virgil Earp, who was thirty-eight at the time. The reenactors, by contrast, were all of retirement age: well over sixty and portraying men who ranged from their late teens to late thirties. Other comments, such as the following posted on the website *Yahoo! Travel*, are representative of tourists' general disappointment with the theatrical quality of the entire reenactment:

Much to my dismay, the show wasn't even "OK" as one would assume. Point of fact, it was awful. Maybe the actors were having a bad day, maybe it was their first day, or maybe I was witnessing the "B-Squad" actors rather than the usual A-Team, but the whole show was a disappointment. The actor's weapons wouldn't fire, you couldn't even hear what they were saying, and they kept their backs to the audience through most of the show.³⁷

The expectations of such tourists are undoubtedly conditioned by the history of the gunfight, and many people seem to expect a certain level of veracity in the portrayal (at least according to reviews on sites such as *TripAdvisor* and *Yahoo! Travel*). Yet there also seems to be the

³⁶ Keith, interview.

³⁷ "DON'T DO IT!," user review of O.K. Corral, *Yahoo! Travel*, July 7, 2007, accessed 10 May 2010, http://travel.yahoo.com/p-travelguide-2809853-o_k_corral_tucson-i.

expectation of “good theatre”—proper enunciation, believable characterization, and actors who face the audience. For many tourists, historical fidelity is apparently less important than a performance that adheres to their expectations of a certain level of theatrical professionalism.

In 2007, Stephen Keith, an actor, a director, and the founder of Tombstone Huckleberry Productions, introduced “Tombstone’s Main Event,” a melodramatized retelling of the gunfight and the events that immediately preceded it; within a few months, the show had supplanted the Wild Bunch’s reenactment as the official reenactment sponsored by the O.K. Corral. Keith replaced the Wild Bunch’s antique revolvers and black powder blanks with prop guns and introduced a star-crossed lover plotline into his “Tragedy at the O.K. Corral.” He also encourages the use of “interactive theatre” or “interactive illusion,” prodding his actors (all of whom are volunteers) to enact their characters for spectators both inside and outside the theatre, but, in the end, to always remember that they are actors, and that they are telling a story rather than presenting a history lesson.

It is on this point that Keith most quarrels with the Wild Bunch’s methods of historical reenactment (which are closer to those employed in Civil War battle reenactments than traditional theatre or even street performance). He faults the elderly reenactors for having too much of a desire to inhabit history and not enough common sense or financial acumen to understand that the reenactment is not a private play, but a moneymaking venture for the town and one which requires “real actors” (Keith’s term). This articulated distinction between “real” theatre and authentic reenactment is what separates Keith’s troupe from other actors in town, as former Hollywood stuntman George Turner (also known as “Tombstone Skip”) explains: “The difference between [Keith] and most of the actors in town is that they are reenactment actors....

He's a stage actor. It's more melodrama stuff. When you're doing reenacting, you have to be 100% accurate."³⁸ Keith wants story; the Wild Bunch wants history.

Keith raises the stakes of the history/histrionic divide with claims that the elderly reenactors, in their devotion to historical accuracy, are not only unconvincing but also dangerous in their roles.³⁹ As an example of the Wild Bunch's preference for historical fidelity that, in turn, leads to unprofessionalism, Keith told the story of two reenactors, each of whom wanted to play Wyatt in the reenactment (in Keith's words, each of these men thought they were "Wyatt come back to life"). The argument between the two men escalated to the point that they began firing black powder blanks at one another at close range; both men sustained minor injuries. For Keith and his supporters, this particular incident was an indication that the entire spatio-performative experience of the town needed to be reassessed; the sites, they argued, needed to be taken away from the historical enthusiasts and amateur actors and put in the hands of people who are more interested in cultivating a safe and enjoyable experience for tourists. Many of these historical enthusiasts, however, have moved to Tombstone in order to live in their imagined Wild West and do not want to increase tourist traffic. They want the town to avoid further commercialization and remain an isolated outpost of Western history.⁴⁰

³⁸ Nicholas Riccardi, "Too Many Wyatt Earps Walking Tombstone's Streets," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/01/nation/na-tombstone1>.

³⁹ I was unable to obtain versions of the story of the takeover of the reenactment other than Keith's; although I have no reason to doubt that the general outlines of his story are accurate, comments from other members of the community led me to believe that not everyone thinks Keith's way of performing history is better for the town. At the very least, it must be noted that Keith has a distinct financial and reputational stake in valorizing his takeover of the reenactment and the theatrical space of the O.K. Corral.

⁴⁰ Gabby McDonald, interview with the author, Tombstone, AZ, May 15, 2010; and Robert Apel, interview with the author, Tombstone, AZ, May 15, 2010.

Ultimately, the owners of the Corral settled on a compromise: Keith and his Huckleberry Players perform their melodramatic reenactment daily, save for the first and third Sundays of each month; those performance slots are given to the Wild Bunch, whose members stage a more historically accurate performance.⁴¹ The disagreement over the best way to present the gunfight through performance has been represented in terms that echo the primary characteristics of the gunfight scenario. Nicholas Riccardi, in a story for the *Los Angeles Times* characterizes the argument thus:

It's been 127 years since Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp fought the Clantons and McLouries [*sic*] at the O.K. Corral here, and Tombstone is still trying to get a handle on its gunslinger problem. Only the desperadoes are no longer brawling over cards or horses. They're fighting for tourist dollars.⁴²

Keith himself takes the gunfight motif even further, opining, “That's Tombstone... You try to bring something fine into their ugly world, and they shoot you for it.”⁴³

Keith’s hyperbole notwithstanding, the gunfighter scenario structures many interactions in Tombstone, from fights over public space and policy to encounters between residents, reenactors, and visitors. Many of the gunfights staged in town involve the audience; some, like the one presented daily at Six-Gun City, bring audience members into the performance space to represent the victims of shootouts. More interesting, however, is the spatial configuration of

⁴¹ “Wild Bunch and Hell’s Belles,” Tombstone’s Chamber of Commerce, accessed February 23, 2011, <http://www.tombstonechamber.com/Wild-Bunch-and-Hells-Belles>.

⁴² Riccardi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

many of the reenactments, some of which take place on the street and thus implicate tourist-spectators as witnesses of the (performed) violence. “Tombstone’s Main Event,” though staged outside, is nevertheless configured as a traditional, proscenium-like theatre, with the audience space clearly separated from the performance space. This spatial divide structures audience behavior, compelling spectators to remain compliant and submissive in their reaction to the performance.

Other embodiments of the gunfight scenario, however, are much more spatially fluid. Eric Gibson, a reenactor, has attended several Wyatt Earp Days celebrations and suggests that there is a great amount of room for the unscripted body to make performative interventions during such events.⁴⁴ Gibson recalls a time that he and his fellow re-enactor Grosvenor Merle-Smith walked down Allen Street and entered a saloon. Calling out to another reenactor who was playing Doc Holliday (not Stephen Keith), they enticed him into the street, where the three of them engaged in a mock-shootout. Gibson says other tourists, both costumed reenactors and others, also joined in, resulting in a playful free-for-all faux gunfight.⁴⁵ In the ludic space and time of a communal celebration, the gunfight scenario here allowed for not just fantasies of, but actual participation in, a street shootout. The scenario, with its easily distinguishable characteristics, allowed for spontaneous performance because all participants understood the structure of the gunfight and the roles they were meant to assume.

⁴⁴ Wyatt Earp Days is a community celebration held each year over Memorial Day weekend and features “gunfights & skits in the street, chili cook-off, hangings, street entertainment, look alike contests, [and an] 1880's fashion show.” “Wyatt Earp Days,” Tombstone Chamber of Commerce, accessed February 23, 2011, <http://www.tombstonechamber.com/Wyatt-Earp-Days>.

⁴⁵ Eric Gibson and Grosvenor Merle-Smith, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, June 26, 2010. I cannot verify Gibson and Merle-Smith’s account, as I never witnessed such spontaneous outbursts of faux street violence in Tombstone, but I was never there on a holiday weekend.

The performed shootouts in Tombstone, both official and spontaneous, follow the scriptive structure established by the gunfight scenario and function to create performative space in the town. The space in Tombstone ought to do something; it ought to performatively re-create the Wild West past. These performance scenarios of gunfights, which structure everything from sanctioned reenactments to street performances to the language of public policy, create a type of space that performs as Wild West; this space is made intelligible by the performances' strict adherence to the scenario's rigid framework. Tourists can step into Tombstone's performative space and immediately recognize what historical periods and events are being reconstructed and, through the scenario's unscripted use of the body, determine their own experiences. If they want to perform that past, tourists can, as Gibson and Merle-Smith did, enter into the scenario as a pre-scripted character. For spectators of these reenactments, however, this difference between the character and the social actor can, as Taylor argues, be made plain and thus allow the tourist to enact a strategy of resistance, recognizing the glamorization of violence that underpins the gunfight scenario.

Though gunfights were not the only nor even the primary reason, the US frontier in the mid- to late nineteenth century was a violent place, characterized by ever-increasing appetites for land, game, and gold. Of all the sacrifices to these appetites—buffalo, ecosystems—the clearest is American Indian peoples, who were victims of a sustained genocidal campaign meant to clear the “empty” land of the west for further (white) settlement. Representations of the US West in the nineteenth century, however, are often characterized not by an acknowledgement of the gluttonous violence of discovery and conquest, but rather by a reliance on tropes of forceful self-expression and individualism. Such representations center on the figure of the gunfighter, which

functions as the epitome of Western heroes and the embodiment of romanticized violence. Nevertheless, gunfighter violence played a very small part in life on the frontier; as Burt Fireman, former director of the Arizona Historical Society quips, “the West was not won by guns, [but] by shovels and sweat.”⁴⁶ The privileging of gunfighters over settlers and individual vendettas over mass genocide in mediatized representations of the Old West is perhaps a predictable outcome of a spectacle-saturated society. However, such a focus, Western historian Stewart Udall argues, skews common perceptions of history and the role of gunslinger violence in frontier societies. “Much of the violence that produced the myths,” he explains, “and on which most movies are based, literally took place in a few minutes of the settlement of the West. But through the fixation of filmmakers on such isolated occurrences, history is wrenched out of shape and a great myth is born that frontier violence forged the essential American character.”⁴⁷

Arguably, the fixation of writers, filmmakers, playwrights, and other artists on hyper-violence has “[driven] the frontier myth toward greater militancy” and propelled the “emergence of the cowboy as gunfighter...toward the absolute of violence.”⁴⁸ This absolute of violence occupies a telling position in US culture, romanticized in a way that emphasizes the individual spirit—a cowboy carried a gun to protect himself; there was no need to call 911 or get anyone else involved. In this way, the performance of waste represented by the aestheticized violence of the mythic West takes on a distinctly political dimension, as Robert Dykstra and Jo Ann Manfra explain:

⁴⁶ Quoted in Stewart L. Udall, Robert R. Dykstra, Michael A Bellesiles, Paula Mitchell Marks, and Gregory H. Nobles, “How the West Got Wild: American Media and Frontier Violence, A Roundtable,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 31.3 (Autumn 2000): 277.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁴⁸ Paul Christensen, “The ‘Wild West’: The Life and Death of a Myth,” *Southwest Review* 93.3 (2008): 314.

But if the [West] of myth and make-believe reassures the American psyche, it also incites it to relish and celebrate a frontier past brimming with aggression and murderous self-defense. These lethal imaginings offer a spurious validation of Americans' love affair with handguns and assault rifles: the West wasn't won with a registered gun; unrestricted gun ownership is in our genes, never mind the U.S. Constitution.⁴⁹

Performers reenact one of the most famous snapshot moments from this past "brimming" with violent individualism—the gunfight at the O.K. Corral—for paying visitors everyday, including holidays, approximately 500 feet from the site of the original bloodbath, performances that both result from and reinforce depictions of the Wild West as hyper-violent.

At the center of the reenactment culture that saturates Tombstone and, indeed, at the center of the town's very identity is an object: the gun. Contemporary Tombstone, sometimes referred to as "Arizona's gun capital" or "Gun City, USA," most likely would not exist as a historical tourist town if not for the role that guns and gun violence have played in its history.⁵⁰ Tombstone has become shorthand for this kind of gun violence, just as the shootout at the O.K. Corral functions as a synecdoche for all Wild West gunfights. In January 2011, for example, following the shooting of Arizona congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik referred to the entire state of Arizona as the "Tombstone of the United

⁴⁹ Robert R. Dykstra and Jo Ann Manfra, "Contesting Boot Hill: The Saga of Metaphorical Dodge City," in *Imagining the Big Open: Nature, Identity, and Play in the New West*, ed. Liza Nicholas, Elaine M. Bapis, and Thomas J. Harvey (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 231.

⁵⁰ Terry Greene Sterling, "Gun City, USA: Gun Sales Up in Tombstone, Arizona's Gun Capital," *The Daily Beast*, January 13, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2011-01-13/gun-sales-up-in-tombstone-arizonas-gun-capital/p/>.

States of America,” utilizing the name of the town as a symbol for wanton gun violence.⁵¹ This legacy, coupled with some of the most lenient gun laws in the United States, have combined to make today’s Tombstone the perfect *mise en scène* for staging the gun as a performing object.

Theorizing the performative qualities of certain material objects, Robin Bernstein introduces the concept of a “scriptive thing,” an object that, “like a play script, broadly structures a performance while simultaneously allowing for resistance and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable.”⁵² Distinguishing “things” from “objects,” she continues: “things are citational in that they arrange and propel bodies in recognizable ways, through paths of evocative movement that have been traveled before.”⁵³ Influenced by a political genealogy of US gun ownership and cultural representations of gun violence, visitors to and residents of contemporary Tombstone participate in complex performative relationships with firearms in which guns function as “scriptive” things, influencing, though not determining, peoples’ behavior.

Based on evidence provided by cowboy dime novels and Western films, one would think that guns really did win the West. The prodigious use of firearms in representations of the Old West, however, is incredibly overblown. Though guns—and especially gunfights—form the centerpiece of virtually all Westerns, performing functions varying from imposing chaos to maintaining order (the most popular revolver of the late frontier period, the Colt Single Action

⁵¹ Jon Henley, “Giffords Shooting: The Sheriff Who Turned the Focus on Rightwing Rhetoric,” *The Guardian*, January 10, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/10/giffords-shooting-sheriff-rightwing-rhetoric>. For Tombstone officials’ response to Dupnik’s comments, in which they suggest “any press is good press,” see James Bourland, “Tombstone Authorities Not Upset with Dupnik Comment,” *Tucson Sentinel Online*, February 7, 2011, accessed April 16, 2012. http://www.tucsonsentinel.com/local/report/020711_tombstone_dupnik.

⁵² Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood From Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 73.

Army, was dubbed “the Peacemaker”), in reality, gun violence was not nearly as widespread as cultural representations imply. Dykstra, writing about Dodge City’s reputation for gun violence, points out that, in the four years after the city was incorporated, “not a single violent death is known to have occurred in Dodge.”⁵⁴ Tombstone, though known for being a place of loose morals and hedonism, was likewise relatively safe once it was formally organized as a town. In its heyday, the community was completely intolerant of gun violence; after all, it was the Clanton and McLaury brothers’ refusal to abide by Tombstone’s strict no-weapons law that ultimately led to the 1881 confrontation outside the O.K. Corral.⁵⁵

The 1881 statute forbidding the carrying of deadly weapons within the town’s borders actually stood as law in Tombstone until 1994, when three residents challenged it in court, claiming it violated state law that allows people to openly carry firearms.⁵⁶ The possibility of tragedy invited by having performers reenacting gunfights on the streets of Tombstone (presumably with non-functioning firearms) while fully armed spectators watched was a primary reason the law stayed on the books so long. Today, however, no such laws exist in Tombstone, and residents and tourists alike daily perform the right to openly carry a weapon.

For many of these gun enthusiasts, open carry rights are rooted in the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. Proponents see the “right to...bear arms” as literally

⁵⁴ Udall, et. al., 280.

⁵⁵ The original law, effective 1881, reads: “It is hereby declared to be unlawful for any person to carry deadly weapons, concealed or otherwise [except the same to be openly in sight, and in the hand] within the limits of the City of Tombstone.” “The Law in Tombstone: Ordinances Relevant in the Preliminary Hearing in the Earp-Holliday Case, Heard Before Judge Wells Spicer,” University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, accessed January 20, 2011, <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/earp/ordinances.html>.

⁵⁶ “Tombstone’s Anti-Firearm Law Could be Eased,” *The Prescott Courier*, January 11, 1994, [http://news.](http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=886&dat=19940110&id=wi0OAAAIBAJ&sjid=pH0DAAAIBAJ&pg=3628,14093)

[google.com/newspapers?nid=886&dat=19940110&id=wi0OAAAIBAJ&sjid=pH0DAAAIBAJ&pg=3628,14093](http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=886&dat=19940110&id=wi0OAAAIBAJ&sjid=pH0DAAAIBAJ&pg=3628,14093) 59.

representing the right to carry a firearm with them wherever they go. For others, wearing a gun is part of their costumed Old West persona, a necessary prop. Regardless of the intention of the person wearing the it, the gun functions as a scriptive thing in that can determine and influence certain aspects of a person's behavior. Bernstein explains the influence of scriptive things thus: "this animative power [of things] derives from the psychological investments of people or from a thing itself. However, things also literally shape human behaviors. [Scriptive things] invite—indeed, create occasions for—repetitions of acts, distinctive and meaningful motions of eyes, hands, shoulders, hips, feet."⁵⁷ Guns, as scriptive things, invite and create occasions for restored behaviors among both their bearers and those who inhabit the same space.

For the wearer, guns script posture and behavior, often inspiring bravado and a sense of self- protection. A consistent theme among gun enthusiasts is the idea that carrying a deadly weapon is a way to *prevent* crime; one of the most popular courses sponsored by the National Rifle Association is called "Refuse to Be a Victim," and it teaches gun owners how to best use their weapons in their own homes against intruders.⁵⁸ This sentiment is echoed by an Arizona state senator who has argued for more lenient gun laws since, he suggests, "when everyone is carrying a firearm, no one is going to be a victim."⁵⁹ Such attitudes of invincibility undoubtedly affect a wearer's physicality, scripting his or her posture and encouraging movement that is, paradoxically, both more relaxed and more guarded. This scriptive effect becomes even clearer

⁵⁷ Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 73.

⁵⁸ "Refuse to Be a Victim Seminar," National Rifle Association, accessed February 10, 2011, <https://www.nrhq.org/rtbav/>.

⁵⁹ Jack Harper, quoted in Sterling.

when the wearer is also dressed up in period costume, as many people, both tourists and residents, regularly are in Tombstone.

The posture of the gunslinger is certainly well known. Legs spread for balance, he instinctively reaches for his hip or side holster, hand on the revolver nestled there, embodying a menacing stance. (Such a posture's ability to intimidate, though enhanced by a Wild West setting, is not limited to that space. Just imagine encountering a person assuming this stance on a train or airplane—firearm or no, this person undoubtedly becomes the focus of concern.) When the time comes, the shooter withdraws his weapon, and then moves into a more dynamic firing pose. In a newspaper publicity shoot demonstrating postures from the 1950 film *The Gunfighter*, actor Gregory Peck repeats these movements with a second hand and gun, ending in an offensive attitude (fig. 1.8). This final aggressive stance perfectly positions the gunfighter to then begin firing, embodying the ultimate in gun culture stances: the shooting posture.

The shooting posture can be seen in “Tombstone’s Main Event,” where actors replicate the various gun postures inspired by the gunfight scenario. In addition to the influence of the scenario, however, the scriptive power of the gun, a thing that encourages these repetitive, socially loaded postures, also impacts the reenactment. These postures are citational, repeating over a century of mediated representations of the gunfighter. The postures also repeat other stylized movements that are shaped by US understandings of race, class, and gender. Gunfighter stances encourage citational performances of white, middle- and lower-class, hyper-masculine body positions; by celebrating the ethos of the gunfighter, whether he is the hero or the villain, such performances reaffirm the romantic view of gunslinger violence as a performative demonstration of self-determination.

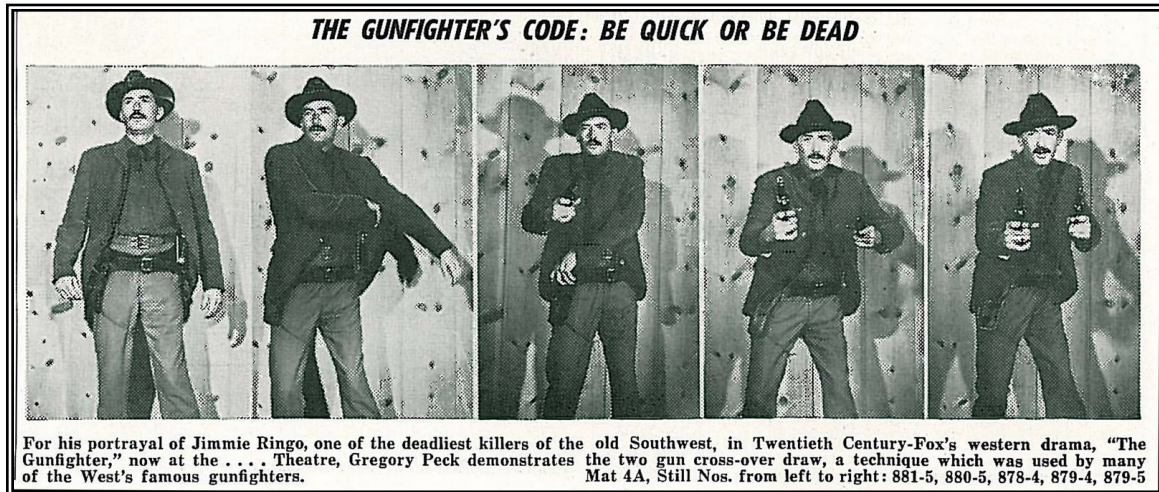


Figure 1.8: Gregory Peck demonstrating “The Gunfighter’s Code.” Publicity photos for *The Gunfighter* (1950).

Significantly, this celebration of gunfighter violence does not translate into all-out support of crime on the part of western and gun enthusiasts; the most important part of Dykstra and Manfra’s claim is that there is a celebration of “aggression and murderous *self-defense*.” Western lawmen and righteous cowboys were no killers; they were merely upstanding US citizens who took the responsibility for defense into their own impressively armed hands. As Lydia DeLyser summarizes: “For many, the commonly held notion that [the West’s] boom-period life was rough, rowdy, and lawless supports not a connection to contemporary urban crime but a subscription to the notion of progress.”⁶⁰ The scriptive power of the gun is, therefore, quite different in a place like contemporary Tombstone than it is in, say, contemporary Baltimore. Much of this difference emerges as a result of issues of race—rarely is a black

⁶⁰ Lydia DeLyser, “When Less is More: Absence and Social Memory in a California Ghost Town,” in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*, ed. Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 33.

cowboy even seen in depictions of the Old West, let alone made the hero (a fact that Mel Brooks turns into a punch line in *Blazing Saddles*)—and even less often is a black man with a gun depicted as a positive symbol of self-defense and individualism.⁶¹ Likewise, women and the very rich or very poor are largely excluded from the realm of celebratory gun ownership, though women's bodies, in various stages of undress, are often used to sell firearms, visually conflating sexuality and scriptive violence.

Contemporary Tombstone has become a focal point for performances of white, middle-class, hyper-masculine, and often right-wing gun culture. Functioning as scriptive things, guns influence not only the postures but also the attitudes of those who carry. A person bearing a weapon openly, whether he is a soldier, a policeman, or a tourist dressed as a cowboy, has the ability to alter public space, deeply impacting the social relations and performances that produce that space. Simply by putting on a holster with a gun in it, a person can transform interpersonal relations, a fact that is made clear by the furor that erupted when anti-health care protestors openly carried weapons to events featuring President Obama in the summer of 2009.⁶² The introduction of guns into public spaces causes these objects to function as scriptive things, interpellating the people present in the spaces as victims and aggressors while reshaping the social relations that produce the space.

In tourist towns that celebrate and symbolize the mythic West, guns can script public space in both positive and negative ways for tourists. Guns, as scriptive objects, work in concert with other kinds of performance to create performative spaces that evoke a “wild” West that

⁶¹ *Blazing Saddles*, directed by Mel Brooks (1974; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2004), DVD.

⁶² Gail Collins, “Gunning for Health Care,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/13/opinion/13collins.html?scp=1&sq=william%20kostric&st=cse>.

allowed for the kinds of freedoms many gun enthusiasts feel are now denied to them (such as openly carrying a firearm). Often, speech associated with this kind of gun culture has a political tinge, such as the post on *The High Road*, a gun enthusiast web forum that suggests anyone who comes to Tombstone ought to take advantage of the right to open carry since “most places in AZ that haven't been contaminated by CA left-tards are very positive about open or CCW carry.” The poster, using the handle “kingjoey,” continues, “most folks here realize that more guns equal less crime.”⁶³ Another poster brings in a note of foreboding: “since your coming from Kali. you should enjoy your freedoms while you can.”⁶⁴ Clearly, some tourists see the opportunity to enact their right to bear arms openly as a positive draw for Tombstone; these visitors want to move through a space that feels historical not only for its actual history but also for its welcoming attitude toward displays of gun culture, which often is represented as a return to a more “pure” representation of US society.

As such, sites like Tombstone spatially perform as historically, culturally, and spectacularly “accurate” representations of what visitors imagine the past would have been like. Because many visitors to Tombstone imagine the past as a particularly blood-soaked and gun-heavy time, they expect to see this replicated when they arrive in the tourist places that represent the Old West. The proliferation of guns, coupled with costumed tourists and interpreters filling the streets, creates a particularly strange performative space in which objects and performers work in tandem to create an auratic, embodied spatial experience of the past as it is imagined.

⁶³ kingjoey, April 1, 2008 (4:18 a.m.), comment on “Open Carry in Tombstone AZ,” *The High Road* (web forum), April 1, 2008, accessed February 10, 2011, <http://www.thehighroad.org/archive/index.php/t-352417.html>. Errors in spelling and grammar are in the original source.

⁶⁴ M203Sniper, April 1, 2008 (3:34 a.m.), comment on “Open Carry in Tombstone AZ,” *The High Road* (web forum), April 1, 2008, accessed February 10, 2011, <http://www.thehighroad.org/archive/index.php/t-352417.html>. Errors in spelling and grammar are in the original source.

One woman, upon moving near Tombstone, said that seeing men wearing guns openly made her feel like she was “in a time warp or something.”⁶⁵

There are, however, drawbacks to the permissiveness of the gun culture in Tombstone. Many residents fear the town’s reputation for welcoming performances of gun culture may encourage unstable people to visit, altering the spatial experiences for everyone. Again, on the pro-gun forum *The High Road*, a resident asks people to leave their firearms at home, arguing:

Believe it or not, Tombstone is a real town, not a movie set. The folks that live there don't especially like the thought of a Looney Toon with a loaded six-shooter trying to relive the O.K. Corral gunfight. Those that insist on carrying just too do it are a royal pain in the backside for the local law enforcement people and the best friend the anti's can have. One highly publicized incident could start a demand for tighter restrictions, which is something we don't want. Put bluntly, you can carry, but you won't make any friends.⁶⁶

Another claim against openly performing gun culture is that it may actually drive tourists away: “if in regular street dress,” another poster comments, “I've been asked not to open carry as it scares the tourists.”⁶⁷ Importantly, this only seems to be a consideration if the gun-bearer is in “street dress”—there seems to be no concern for tourists’ fears of a loaded gun if the wearer is in

⁶⁵ Nora_AZ, October 2, 2007 (10:13 a.m.), comment on “Tombstone Forum: Guns,” *TripAdvisor*, October 1, 2007, accessed February 10, 2011, http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g31381-i1250-k1488146-Guns-Tombstone_Arizona.html.

⁶⁶ Old Fluff, April 1, 2008 (2:59 a.m.), comment on “Open Carry in Tombstone AZ,” *The High Road* (web forum), April 1, 2008, accessed February 10, 2011, <http://www.thehighroad.org/archive/index.php/t-352417.html>. Errors in spelling and grammar are in the original source.

⁶⁷ Triphammer, April 1, 2008 (2:39 a.m.), comment on “Open Carry in Tombstone AZ,” *The High Road* (web forum), April 1, 2008, accessed February 10, 2011, <http://www.thehighroad.org/archive/index.php/t-352417.html>.

costume, presumably because that kind of gun performance actually *supports* touristic expectations and experiences of Tombstone's performative space.

In spite of the gun's scriptive powers, both tourists and residents of Tombstone maintain a certain amount of agency in their encounters with gun culture. Although some have argued that allowing people to open or concealed carry deadly weapons in Tombstone could increase confusion or lead to tragedy since so many faux gunfights are staged daily, that dire prediction does not seem to have come true. Rather, no matter how successful Tombstone's performative space is at convincing visitors they are actually traveling to the past as "a foreign country,"⁶⁸ or how much carrying a gun scripts behavior to encourage restored behavioral postures of bravado, visitors and residents alike manage to discern between performance and reality. There have been no "highly publicized incidents" of gun violence as Old Fluff feared, and street performances continue with no intervention from "confused" open carriers bearing live weapons. Nevertheless, as Bernstein offers, "when a thing scripts actions, it manifests the repertoire of its historical moment."⁶⁹ Scriptive gun performances in Tombstone manifest the repertoires of two distinct historical moments: the imagined, violence-laden Wild West, and the increasingly paranoid, politicized US gun culture of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.

Wyatt Earp, Tombstone, and Iconicity

There remains a great amount of disagreement over the level of the Earps' guilt in the shootout and the ensuing events among historians, tourists, and Western aficionados. Three days

⁶⁸ L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953; repr., New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 17.

⁶⁹ Robin Bernstein, "Dances With Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race," *Social Text* 27.4 (December 2009): 89.

after the shooting, on October 29, 1881, Ike Clanton filed murder charges against the Earps and Holliday. Wyatt and Holliday were called into court before Judge Wells Spicer (Virgil and Morgan were not required to appear in person as they were recovering from gunshot wounds sustained in the fight). At a preliminary hearing, Spicer determined there was not enough evidence to indict, and Earp and Holliday were released.⁷⁰ By this time, however, the tide of public opinion had turned against them, and the Earps never regained their former stature in the town. People associated with the Cowboys despised the Earps and Holliday even more as bullies, and the Earps's previous allies now saw them as unsustainable liabilities.

Shortly after the Spicer hearing, Virgil Earp was shot by hidden assailants, causing him to lose the use of his left arm; a few months later, Morgan Earp was murdered by a shot in the back in a billiard parlor, again by unknown gunmen. In response, Wyatt, Holliday, and several other men formed a posse and undertook the so-called "Earp Vendetta Ride," tracking down and murdering those they believed responsible for Virgil and Morgan's shootings.⁷¹ It is unclear how many men the posse killed; the official count is four, though it is possible that Earp's group murdered over three times that many. While Earp was out chasing down Cowboys, Sheriff Johnny Behan's posse was tracking him. At the end of his Vendetta Ride, Earp left Tombstone and the Arizona Territory for good, heading first to New Mexico and then on to Colorado. Throughout the rest of his life, Earp struggled in vain to justify (and be absolved from) his

⁷⁰ Unsurprisingly, the hearing is rarely included in novels, films, plays, and television programs that treat the O.K. Corral myth. The notion of such an orderly and predictable social response to a disputed killing simply doesn't align with conceptualizations of the Earps as men who righteously took justice into their own hands.

⁷¹ Among the many reenactment activities in which tourists can participate in Tombstone is the five-day horseback trip "Wyatt Earp's Vendetta Ride" offered by Great American Adventures Travel Company. The ride follows "Earp's bloody trail of retribution" on horseback; participants are highly encouraged to dress up for the ride. "Wyatt Earp's Vendetta Ride," Great American Adventures, accessed February 23, 2011, <http://www.great-american-adventures.com/Wyatt%20Earp%27s%20Vendetta%20Ride.htm>.

actions in Tombstone; nevertheless, at his death in 1929, public opinion remained ambivalent about his exploits.⁷²

In most post-mortem accounts of Wyatt Earp's life, however, ambivalence disappears and the Earps and Holliday are portrayed as vigilante heroes, celebrated for their great courage and cunning in taking on the lustily violent cowboys. In large part, this assessment of the shootout finds its genesis in Stuart N. Lake's pulpy, celebratory biography, *Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal*.⁷³ The book, published in 1931, was a wild success, resuscitating Earp's flagging reputation and making the Tombstone gunfight a synecdoche for the romantic lawlessness of the now disappeared Wild West. Lake's veneration of the Earps as rough-and-tumble, but ultimately moral and heroic, lawmen provided the pattern for the many versions of the gunfight that would follow in popular culture.⁷⁴ It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Lake's book in the construction of the O.K. Corral myth; Dykstra and Manfra characterize it thus: "Reprinted as recently as 1994...the book has provoked some forty years of controversy over its factual merits. Flaws and all, the widely acclaimed biography elevated Earp into a major American historical figure and definitively established [Tombstone] as a cultural icon."⁷⁵ Earp's, and thus Tombstone's, celebrity therefore begins not with the shootout itself, but with Lake's biography

⁷² Burns, 256-58; and Bell, 124-25.

⁷³ Stuart N. Lake, *Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931).

⁷⁴ Celluloid has proven a particularly hospitable home for the gunfight. Notable films include: *Frontier Marshal* (1939); *Tombstone, the Town Too Tough to Die* (1942); John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946); *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957); *Hour of the Gun* (1967); *Doc* (1971), a revisionist treatment of the fight and Doc Holliday's involvement; *Tombstone* (1993); and *Wyatt Earp* (1994).

⁷⁵ Dykstra and Manfra, 226.

of Wyatt, which established the gambler and sometime con artist as a role-icon of the Wild West lawman—despite Earp “never [being] more than a deputy or an assistant marshal.”⁷⁶

The fact that Earp was never actually elected sheriff is perhaps the most visible challenge to his function as a role-icon, but it is hardly the only one. More recent and more assiduously researched biographies than Lake’s, which took Wyatt at his word, have addressed the complexities of his character and existence in the West.⁷⁷ As Bob Boze Bell, owner and publisher of *True West* magazine, puts it:

Wyatt Earp was never the marshal of a town or the sheriff of a county. He was accused by the courts of embezzling school funds and altering public records for financial gain. He was arrested and indicted for horse theft. He was indicted for murder in Arizona but he escaped as a fugitive from justice. He was accused of throwing a prizefight. He was arrested for a con game. It is a matter of public record that he was an outlaw, a burglar, a hired tough, a claim jumper and a cardsharp. And there is some evidence to conjecture he may have been a pimp, a bully, a braggart, a show-off and a big, fat liar. And long may his story be told.⁷⁸

Bell emphasizes the ways in which Earp does not actually fit the simple symbol he has become. However, celebrities are not seen in their complex totality; on the contrary, the process of elevating of an individual to celebrity and then role-icon status is almost entirely reliant on

⁷⁶ Bell, 132.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Tefertiller’s *Wyatt Earp*; and Allen Barra, *Inventing Wyatt Earp: His Life and Many Legends* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 2009).

⁷⁸ Bell, 91.

smoothing out conflicting habits of character, whether they are good or bad. “The genesis of a role-icon requires not the exposition of nuanced positions, in which the shades of gray are duly rendered,” Roach explains, “but rather the vivid flash of lurid details.”⁷⁹ This vivid flash of lurid details is what cements the image of the role-icon in popular culture, allowing the icon to do the heavy lifting as a representation of cultural hopes and expectations.

The many mediatized versions of his life and adventures that reinforce Lake’s conception of him as hero of the Old West support Earp’s position as role-icon of the Western lawman whose righteous anger appropriately supersedes the law. His fulfillment of this role is not due to his individuality, but rather to his ability to embody a type, a function supported by the ubiquity of images and reproductions in the media of Earp as lawman. Roach suggests that this very ubiquity is what helps create and promote the celebrity aura, which “arises not merely from the singularity of an original, as Walter Benjamin supposed, but also from the fabulous success of its reproducibility in the imaginations of many others, charmed exponentially by the number of its copies.”⁸⁰ Earp’s aura is enforced and perpetrated by the many repetitions—films, books, television programs, paintings, even a US postage stamp—of his image as supremely representative of the Western lawman tradition.

Wyatt Earp, in spite of his beginning as an actual person, is now a sign of the mythic West and, “as a sign,” P. David Marshall suggests, “the celebrity sheds its own subjectivity and individuality and becomes an organizing structure for conventionalized meaning.... The material reality of the celebrity sign—that is, the actual person who is at the core of the representation—

⁷⁹ Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 101.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

disappears into a cultural formation of meaning.”⁸¹ Earp thus functions not as a real, complicated person, but rather as an “organizing structure,” a figure that simultaneously embodies and occludes the tensions at the heart of the Western myth. He has become an icon of the Wild West.

“The crux of iconicity,” branding expert Douglas Holt explains, “is that the person or the thing is widely regarded as the most compelling symbol of a set of ideas or values that a society deems important.”⁸² A role-icon, then, functions as a symbolic representation, but a malleable one. Celebrities that fall out of vogue often do so because the tangle of symbolic meanings they represent fails to change with and adapt to society’s needs. Wyatt Earp, and the mythic West in general, have managed to change as necessary, presenting a representational field upon which (or within which) conflicting strands of US identity can continue to be interrogated. For example, midcentury films and television programs featuring Earp and the gunfight emphasized a right/wrong, civilized/savage dichotomy, reflecting the nation’s positivist outlook during and directly following World War II.⁸³ By the 1970s, however, this mood had shifted as the US became more disillusioned with authority, and *Doc* (1971), a retelling of the gunfight from Holliday’s point of view, took a distinctly revisionist stance on the Western “heroes,” attempting to inject a dose of hyperrealism into the standard clichés of the epic West. The film portrayed elements of brutality, drug use, and abuse of power that were uncommon in earlier examples of the genre. The most recent retellings of the gunfight, *Tombstone* (1993) and *Wyatt Earp* (1994),

⁸¹ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 56, 57.

⁸² Douglas B. Holt, *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2004), 1.

⁸³ See, for example, *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* (television series, 1955-61); *My Darling Clementine* (1946; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2004), DVD; and *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*, directed by John Sturges (1957; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2003), DVD.

return to a more celebratory tone, reflecting a post-Cold War attitude of the ascendant US values of capitalism and idiosyncratic individualism.

Role-icons can embody and reflect both a national mood and individual understandings, and a primary component of such iconicity is this ability to function on multiple levels of meaning. While for many Earp has come to represent a kind of reconsideration of the myth of the Wild West, revealing the morally ambiguous and troubling personalities that inhabit its stories, for others he continues to epitomize a lucid, unambiguous strain of moral clarity. In a 2009 blog entry, SJ Reidhead, an author who self-publishes books about Tombstone's history, commemorates the anniversary of the gunfight with an homage to Wyatt Earp and George W. Bush, whom she sees as an incarnation of the Wild West lawman (the heroic version). "We are a nation of Wyatt Earps," Reidhead claims. "Stand up and fight for what is right no matter what the personal cost...Fact is, once upon a time a Wyatt Earp clone resided in the Oval Office." She continues:

Right is right and wrong is wrong. A President of the United States should know the difference and should know how to lead. Actions speak louder than words read from a teleprompter. We should all have the courage of a Wyatt Earp or a George W. Bush. [...]A Wyatt Earp, a George W. Bush stood up to the face of terror and fire[d] point blank at it, and asked questions later. They were the action sof [*sic*] a man, not some cowardly bowl of jello contemplating his legacy. Those are the actions of courage, of someone not thinking of themselves, but protecting others around them.

It is also the action that lesser men of lesser honor and little courage or valor will second guess for a hundred years.

Liberal historians have not been kind to Wyatt Earp. They will not be kind to George W. Bush. They lack the capacity to understand that special kind of Wild West, All American valor that helped tame a rugged and dangerous land.⁸⁴

Reidhead clearly interprets Earp (and, later, George W. Bush) as a fulfillment of a type of Wild West icon—that of the fearless lawman willing to endure the condemnation of others who simply are not courageous enough to stand up for what is right.

As this blog entry indicates, the figure of Earp, like other celebrities and icons, provides individuals a way to work through the troubling and conflictual elements of culture and national character. Clearly, someone with more contested feelings about Bush and Earp could also compare the two figures yet come to very different conclusions. Joshua Gamson, in *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary Culture*, suggests that providing an avenue for the negotiation of cultural meaning is one of the primary functions of the celebrity in the US: “playing with culture,” he remarks, “offers participants the chance to work through in a free realm everyday life experiences that typically appear in arenas of consequence.”⁸⁵ Bush, a polarizing figure who often played up his “cowboy” persona, was firmly in the arena of consequence; typifying him as an example of a “Wyatt Earp” allows Reidhead to negotiate his legacy in the free realm of

⁸⁴ SJ Reidhead, “Wyatt Earp and George W. Bush,” *The Pink Flamingo* (blog), October 26, 2009, accessed September 28, 2010, <http://www.thepinkflamingoblog.com/2009/10/26/wyatt-earp-and-george-w-bush/>. Errors in spelling and grammar are in the original source.

⁸⁵ Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 185.

celebrity. Viewing Earp as a celebrity, and therefore a site of “safe” cultural contestation, helps explain why he has remained present in the US cultural imaginary for so long, and how, exactly, his legacy has influenced the construction of the mythic West.

Unsurprisingly, Earp’s celebrity plays a central role in Tombstone’s promotion as the premiere Wild West tourist destination. When tourists encounter a historical site, they assume positions as constructors of their own experience of place, engaging in the tactics that build a personal, embodied experience of a tourist location. The body in the landscape, geographer John Wylie theorizes, is both seeing and seen, though how and where the tourists imagine themselves as being seen varies from person to person and depends not only on their individual horizons of expectations, as conditioned by their unique patterns of media consumption, but also by the communal memory of which they are a part.⁸⁶ As Michel de Certeau explains, “places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body.”⁸⁷ The place of the tourist site becomes a personal landscape for each person who visits, conditioned by his individual culture, experiences, and expectations for how the space will “perform” its history and the reality of an embodied encounter with a historical place.

For many current visitors to and residents of Tombstone, the 1993 film *Tombstone* deeply influences this expectation and the resulting encounters. According to Keith, who plays Doc Holliday in *Tombstone’s Main Event* and street performances, the film led to a renaissance of

⁸⁶ John Wylie, *Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 151-2.

⁸⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 108.

sorts for the town in the mid- to late-1990s: suddenly, the Earp brothers and Holliday were all the rage once again. Keith, who has a personal and financial stake in stoking the myth of the gunfight, claims that, when tourists go to Tombstone, they do not actually want to feel like they are in history – they want to feel like they are in a *movie*.⁸⁸ To that end, Keith and his Huckleberry Players recreate not Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday, but rather Kurt Russell as Wyatt Earp and Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday (figs. 1.9 and 1.10). The owners of the O.K. Corral seem to be well aware of the tourists' desire for simulation as well; the set of "Tombstone's Main Event," located behind the corral proper and at a diagonal to the actual site of the shootout, recreates in miniature some of the more famous buildings of Tombstone, disregarding any historical accuracy that may be called for in situating the actual gun battle.

These curatorial decisions to focus more on the recreation of a movie than the recreation of the past obviously influence the way Tombstone's history is marketed and sold to tourists. Celebrity theory, most often applied to actual persons for obvious reasons, can nevertheless also help make clear some of the elements present in the production of performative space at a site like Tombstone. The site itself, like the celebrity, is flattened out, emptied of complex meaning and then presented as a tabula rasa upon which (or, again, within which) identities, histories, and community relations can be contested. Just as the meaning of the star changes over time, so, too, does the meaning of the historical tourist site, which performs an embodiment of its own ideology, its significance both contested and supported by visitors and residents.

⁸⁸ Keith, interview.



Figure 1.9: The Earps and Holliday gather on Allen Street. Film still from *Tombstone*, directed by George P. Cosmatos, 1993. L to R: Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday, Sam Elliott as Virgil Earp, Bill Paxton as Morgan Earp, and Kurt Russell as Wyatt Earp.



Figure 1.10: Actors from *Tombstone's Main Event* gather on Allen Street. L to R: Actors playing Morgan Earp, Wyatt Earp, Virgil Earp, and Doc Holliday (Stephen Keith). Tombstone, Arizona, April 27, 2010.

Marshall's argument about the celebrity, that it "sheds its own subjectivity and becomes an organizing structure for conventionalized meaning," can also be applied to historical tourist sites like Tombstone.⁸⁹ Though Tombstone is a functioning town, with fifteen hundred residents (many of whom work in area mines or for the government and have little to do with the touristic "honeypot" of Allen and Fremont Streets), in the cultural imagination its "material reality [has] disappear[ed] into a cultural formation of meaning."⁹⁰ The actual physical town recedes, replaced by mediated images and imagined scenarios: for tourists, the site functions as a movie set come to life. Whatever material details are missing from the embodied encounter are, in turn, provided by the tourist's imagination, as David Lowenthal suggests: "If the character of the place is gone in reality, it remains preserved in the mind's eye of the visitor, formed by historical imagination, untarnished by rude social facts. The enduring streets and buildings persuade him that past is present."⁹¹ In spite of the fact that, on the surface, Tombstone has lost much of its historical prestige and authenticity, tourists are able to imaginatively cast their desires onto the material remains of the past that are present in the town. In this way, the space of Tombstone functions like a celebrity: an icon that both symbolizes a coherent ideology and, at the same time, allows each individual visitor to project her or his own experience upon it.

This interplay of imagination and reality, the overlay of a representational image onto a physical site, is an important element in the creation and maintenance of performative space at historical tourist sites. The interaction between a visitor's imaginary maps (often influenced by and cultivated through mediated representations of the site) and the actual material reality is the

⁸⁹ Marshall, 56.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹¹ David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* 65.1 (Jan. 1975): 7.

action that bodies forth such space—the tourist expects the space to perform, to fulfill expectations, and therefore interprets the space according to those expectations. Contemporary Tombstone is indelibly shaped by its mediated representation in the 1993 film *Tombstone*, and at least some tourists come in order to step into the film: the actual space of the town thus becomes a stage for performances of the mythic Wild West.

Disappearing People and Haunted Landscapes

Along with righteous and superabundant violence, representations of the mythic west also depend on specific conceptualizations of disappearance—particularly the disappearance of the frontier and the people who inhabited its lands. In his seminal 1893 article “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” historian Frederick Jackson Turner quotes an 1890 Census bulletin which declares the end of the US frontier: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement,” the bulletin claims, “but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line.”⁹² Turner sees this moment as a definitive break with the past, hyperbolically asserting the importance of this Census report and, in the process, establishing one of the most influential and controversial theories of US history: the so-called “frontier thesis.” “This brief official statement [from the Census bulletin] marks the closing of a great historic movement,” Turner claims. “Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of

⁹² Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History*, ed. Frederick Jackson Turner (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1920), 1.

American settlement westward, explain American development.”⁹³ Though Turner’s thesis has been hotly debated and in many ways discredited, his idea of the frontier as instigator of progress and shaper of national character has nevertheless influenced popular consciousness in the United States in innumerable ways.

Turner delivered his paper at the World’s Colombian Exposition of 1893, hosted in Chicago, Illinois. Just west of the Exposition, William F. Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, set up his own exhibition, which celebrated and mythologized that very frontier of which Turner had pronounced the loss. At the time, Cody was one of the biggest stars in the United States, and his aggrandized depiction of the Wild West and the US frontier served as truth for the increasing numbers of Americans who would never see the now-disappeared frontier or the American Indian civilizations that once inhabited the open space beyond that dividing line.⁹⁴ Bills for Cody’s show emphasized this aspect; one flyer included the following note from William Tecumseh Sherman: “Billy; for my children and grandchildren, who can never see these things as we saw them, I thank you.”⁹⁵ Though this advertisement is undated, Sherman died in 1891; a sense of nostalgia for the retreating frontier had clearly set in even before the Census bulletin that prompted Turner’s pronouncement of epochal change.

The idea that no one else would experience the emptiness of space and the marvelous creatures (human and animal) that inhabited that space runs through both Turner’s and Cody’s

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Larry McMurtry has argued persuasively that Cody (and Annie Oakley with him) were not only some of the biggest stars of the 1880s and 1890s, but that they could be considered “the first American superstars.” Larry McMurtry, *The Colonel and Little Missie: Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, and the Beginnings of Superstardom in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 5.

⁹⁵ Reprinted in Arthur Kopit, *Indians* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1968), 35ff.

depictions of western life, marbling the fantasy of the frontier with a nostalgia for a time when land was plentiful and free and available for individual conquer (disregarding, of course, those who already inhabited it). Though Turner and Cody certainly saw the end of the frontier differently, one as marking a historical epoch and the other as an opportunity to create “educational” entertainment that could be packaged and sold, both depictions have indelibly influenced US conceptions of the Wild West, the beauty and savagery of nature, and the danger and excitement of frontier life. So influential, in fact, were these two portrayals of the frontier that they have continued to influence the way tourists interact with and understand the West, encouraging visitors to seek out the “empty” and disappearing frontier—yet another site to be seen and added to the historical tourist’s repertoire of embodied encounters with the disappeared and disappearing.

Space in the mythic West is often conceptualized and aestheticized as empty and vast—an embodiment of Henri Lefebvre’s absolute space⁹⁶—and best viewed from a perspectival distance. This idea of Western space is rooted in the philosophical discourse of Manifest Destiny and the nineteenth-century ideal of the land west of the Mississippi as uninhabited and untouched. This was space for the taking. Ontologically, this concept is as old as migration in general, though this particular version seems to emerge from the European colonialist imperative of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the “discovery” of North America. In the nineteenth century, photography served to solidify this conception of the West as empty space and then, later, of that empty space receding and giving way to owned and occupied places. Film took its cue from the perspectival landscape photography that characterized imagery of the West, bearing

⁹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 48.

“its own implicitly romantic prejudices against the city as a corrupting influence on human nature. Its proclivities as a visual medium were to lavish attention on the epic landscapes of Utah’s Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon, the vast grasslands and deserts of the Southwest, with the town pockmarking the otherwise pure desolation, with a graveyard full of slow draws and executed bad men.”⁹⁷

Perspectival depictions of the west institutionalize the idea of the forever disappearing: in the ideal perspectivalist painting, the scenery angles in, coming to a point and then fading into infinity—never ending, but vanishing nonetheless. The concept of disappearing permeates both idealizations of the West and expectations of historical tourism. In conceptions of the West, the frontier is always already vanishing, as is empty space, animals, and American Indian civilizations. While Cody was entertaining audiences outside the World’s Columbian Exposition and Turner was expounding upon the loss of the frontier within, representative “villages” of American Indians presented exposition attendees with what Horace H. Morgan warned may “furnish the last opportunity for an acquaintance with ‘the noble red-man’ before he achieves annihilation or at least loss of identity.”⁹⁸ As early as 1892, then, and most likely even earlier, American Indian culture was presented as disappearing, along with the frontier, and, with this presentation came a paradoxical nostalgia that celebrated the forward march of progress while simultaneously mourning the cultures and lands that were victims of this success.

The fundamental tension of the mythic West lies in this notion of progress. Paul Christensen has pointed out that ambivalence about what the West truly represents permeates

⁹⁷ Christensen, 315.

⁹⁸ Horace H. Morgan, *The Historical World’s Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide* (St. Louis, MO: Pacific Publishing Company, 1892), 294.

almost all analyses of an aesthetics of the mythic West. The US, he suggests, “inherited a sense of the West that was made ambiguous by the very fact that it was not only the place where westward expansion ended; it was also the arena in which competing ideologies came to fight it out.” He goes on:

One side saw itself as victorious over Catholicism and lingering resentments over the Mexican War of 1836, and over the indigenous life of the Plains. The other West appeared to please for preservation of its ethnic diversity and customs, its languages and tribal gods. [...] Conquest and the remorse and longing for wilderness arose in the same moment. One could read the West from two sides, but not simultaneously. Their signs were mutually exclusive, and would figure prominently in the great pendulum swings of political life—a Wild West that meant victory over aliens, and a tragedy of violence and waste of America’s great native heritage.⁹⁹

This tension is everywhere present in representations of the Old West: there is at once a romanticization of the native culture that was genocidally eradicated and a glorification of the kind of imperialist aggression that led to the disappearance of the great indigenous civilizations. Figure 11, a reproduction of Edward S. Curtis’s famous photograph *Vanishing Race*, embodies this romantic notion in the figures of perspectively retreating Navajos. Curtis furthers this framing in his summary of the photograph: “The thought which this picture is meant to convey is

⁹⁹ Christensen, 218.

that the Indians as a *race*, already shorn in their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future.”¹⁰⁰

In an article for *American Memory*, the Library of Congress’s enormous digital preservation enterprise, Native American scholar David R.M. Beck argues that the project of marginalizing the existence of American Indians began in the late nineteenth century, when images like Curtis’s emphasized a nostalgic view of native heritage as something disappearing. Beck



Figure 1.11: *Vanishing Race*. Photograph by Edward S. Curtis, Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis's 'The North American Indian': the Photographic Images*, 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Edward S. Curtis, “Edward S. Curtis’s ‘The North American Indian’: Photographic Images,” *American Memory*, Library of Congress, accessed August 5, 2010, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?curt:1:/temp/~ammem_11gM::. Emphasis in the original.

maintains that a confluence of events—Wild West shows, ethnographic displays of Indian culture and indigenous bodies, the massacre at Wounded Knee, the end of the Plains Wars, and the government’s program of forced assimilation—served to relegate American Indians to mythic and historical status, transforming them from people into part of a long-disappeared West that could only be preserved through spatial recreation and tourism. He explains:

Railroad barons also used imagery of Indians as a vanishing race to sell tourist vacations to the west. Both the Santa Fe and Burlington Northern railway companies created tourism campaigns around these types of images. National Parks such as Grand Canyon and Glacier National Park displayed Indians in traditional regalia as haunting reminders of the past as part of their tourist attractions. In fact, these ideas came to permeate society, from advertising images to the images summer camps and resorts used to attract tourists to those portrayed in popular literature.¹⁰¹

Though Tombstone does not actively market itself as a location defined by its native heritage, it is nevertheless “haunted” by the bodies of the Apaches that preceded the miners, cowboys, and lawmen that brought Tombstone fame as one of the wildest towns in the Old West, and by the violence and assimilation that has dismissed an entire civilization as a tourist tagline.

As tourists move through Tombstone’s performative space, interpellated as performers themselves—performing “tourism”—they are necessarily confronted by these hauntings. Performance as restored behavior exists through the continuing repetition of already behaved behaviors. In the case of tourism, this involves walking through museums, displays, historical or

¹⁰¹ David R.M. Beck, “The Myth of the Vanishing Race,” *American Memory*, Library of Congress, accessed August 5, 2010, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/essay2.html>.

otherwise remarkable buildings; watching performances of historical events or native cultures; and, importantly, recording these interactions, usually through photography. “Performance,” Taylor reminds us, “becomes visible, meaningful, within the context of a phantasmagoric repertoire of repeats.”¹⁰² Tourism as performance capitalizes on this process—as visitors perform tourism in the West, the underlying colonial discourses of their movements becomes clearer, especially through mediated touristic encounters with disappeared native cultures: these cultures are disembodied, rendered as ghostly subjects of nostalgia.

Like most tourists who visit historical sites to have some kind of embodied encounter with the vanished past, visitors to Old West historical tourist sites like Tombstone hope for embodied experiences that provide a material genealogical link to historical spaces. In particular, many of Tombstone’s tourists look for encounters with open or empty space, represented by the landscape of the Sonoran desert, and with the “vanished races” of the American Indians, represented by museum displays within the O.K. Corral. When visitors are admitted to the O.K. Corral historical site, they first encounter a gift shop outfitted with the usual tourist trinkets, though here presented with a Wild Western flair: shot glasses, wanted posters, child-size glitter cowboy boots. Then, before the beginning of the shootout reenactment, tourists are permitted to wander the grounds of the corral while waiting for the show to begin. The site is somewhat restored and features versions of some of the buildings that would have been present during the gunfight—most notably, the studio of Tombstone’s resident photographer, C.S. Fly. Fly captured many of the most famous shots of Tombstone from the mining era, but he is probably best

¹⁰² Taylor, 144.

known for his photographs featuring the Chiricahua Apaches that lived near the town, including a series featuring Geronimo on the day of his surrender to the US government.

Photographs have greatly influenced public memories of the West; in particular, photography has advanced the notion of the West as a vast, open, and disappearing site. Additionally, photographs of the west have contributed to the paradoxical nostalgia surrounding once-dominant American Indian civilizations. The curators of the O.K. Corral have capitalized on tourists' nostalgia for vanished native cultures by setting up a gallery of Fly's photographs of the Chiricahuas inside a reconstruction of his photographic studio that stood next to the corral. Roughly one-third of the exhibit is of period photographs of Tombstone's establishment and existence as a mining town. The other two-thirds of the exhibit are given over to Fly's staged "slice-of-life" photographs of Geronimo and his people, several of which were taken during General Crook's negotiations with Geronimo and the Chiricahuas, which ended in the Apaches' surrender (fig. 1.12).

Artfully staged to reveal their "authenticity," these photographs are reportedly the only ones ever taken of American Indians while they were still at war with the United States. While the photographs do offer a fascinating portrait of many elements of Chiricahua life, they also, as Marianne Hirsch argues, give "the illusion of being a simple transcription of the real, a trace touched directly by the event it records." Therefore, she continues, they have "the effect of naturalizing cultural practices and of disguising their stereotyped and coded characteristics."¹⁰³ In this case, the cultural processes that are naturalized include the aestheticization of the disappearance of American Indian peoples, civilizations, and cultures.

¹⁰³ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7.



Figure 1.12: Geronimo, Son, and Two Picked Braves. Tombstone, Arizona, March 27, 1886.
Photograph by C.S. Fly. Reproduction on display at the O.K. Corral.

Fly's photographs that are on display at the O.K. Corral represent the disappeared but never gone bodies of the Chiricahuas, bodies that function as an example of Derrida's *revenant*, or ghostly referent. "In the photograph," Derrida argues:

The referent is noticeably absent, suspendable, vanished into the unique past time of its event, but the reference to this referent, call it the intentional movement of reference (since Barthes does in fact appeal to phenomenology in this book), implies just as irreducibly the having-been

of a unique and invariable referent. It implies the “return of the dead” in the very structure of both its image and the phenomenon of its image.¹⁰⁴

The photos are ghosted by the real bodies that are forever gone yet entirely inescapable, as Hirsch suggests: “the referent is both present (implied in the photograph) and absent (it has been there but is not here now). The referent haunts the picture like a ghost: it is a revenant, a return of the lost and dead other.”¹⁰⁵ The photos, then, perform the material function of both mourning and naturalizing the disappearance of American Indian culture. These displays invoke the ghosts of Tombstone’s oldest inhabitants, constructing a performative space that is haunted by an eternally disappearing, but never fully vanished (or banished) native past.

While photography most often enhances the fetishization of disappearance, historical tourism can problematize the perspectival view inherent in both landscape depiction and representations of American Indian culture, a challenge that occurs through the presence of bodies both past and present. Many bodies – those of indigenous peoples who were driven out or eradicated, of settlers and gunslingers, and, in contemporary times, of tourists intent on experiencing the “Wild” West and of the people who actually live in the landscape – inscribe meaning on the space of the West; indeed, these bodies and their interactions *produce* the space of present landscapes through what Lefebvre terms the “social relations of production.”¹⁰⁶ The space, the landscape itself, is embodied by its inhabitants and visitors; it is bodied forth by their social interactions. Places, then, are not mere landscapes in the sense that they are finite objects

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 53.

¹⁰⁵ Hirsch, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Lefebvre, 83.

to be consumed by the tourist's gaze; on the contrary, they are fluid, constantly in flux, and are created "simultaneously in the land, people's minds, customs, ...bodily practices," and social relations.¹⁰⁷

Though the American Southwest has often been presented in perspectival terms in film, photos, and even literature, tourists actually experience landscapes as embodied encounters, rather than merely through the perceptual "tourist gaze."¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in Tombstone, spatial strategies and performance intertwine to create a uniquely phenomenological experience of the frontier, one in which both the town and the surrounding desert are made to perform in a particular way for visitors—Tombstone's landscape functions as performative as well as natural and historical space. This performative space is created by visitors engaged in the perceptual work of embodying their own imagined western (and southern) frontier through their touristic encounter with the landscape. Though vision is an important element of this imagined space, when tourists actually go to Tombstone, what they discover is a far more complex sensual engagement with the space and landscape of the town.

By sensual engagement, I mean not only the embodied use of the senses—smell, touch, hearing, and taste—as they are utilized in the tourist experience, but also the touristic expectation of a "real" encounter. Such engagement considers the tourist body as one thread in the tapestry of cultural context and networks of power that constrain and give meaning to tourist locations.

¹⁰⁷ Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, "Locating Culture," in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. Setha Low and Denise Lawrence- Zúñiga (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 6. In this passage, Low and Lawrence- Zúñiga are referring to anthropologist Stuart Rockefeller's theories of space and place.

¹⁰⁸ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2002), 3. Since the early twenty-first century, tourism scholars, including Urry, have turned from a more vision-centric theorization of the tourist experience toward theories (including performance as a methodology) that engage more fully with the embodied experience of the tourist. Nevertheless, Urry's original concept of the gaze continues to wield a sizeable influence over tourism studies in general.

Using performance as a paradigm, one can explore the ways in which the body of the individual interacts with the space of the tourist location, often reiterating proscribed patterns of behavior—but also transgressing those patterns and expectations. The contemporary bodies of both tourists and those who work in the travel industry (or who are caught in it, by virtue of living in or near a tourist destination) inhabit the space of the tourist location, existing and resisting within the webs of space and culture that contextualize tourist expectations and encounters, engaging in the sensuous.

The very vastness and emptiness of Western space (at least, as Wallace Stegner points out, the West outside of the cities where 75% of residents of the American West reside) functions to both make small and enlarge the human body within and against the landscape. In *The American West as Living Space*, Stegner quotes William Least Heat Moon's conceptualization of this enlargement:

William Least Heat Moon: The true West...differs from the East in one great, pervasive, influential, and awesome way: space. The vast openness changes the roads, towns, houses, farms, crops, machinery, politics, economics, and, naturally ways of thinking.... Space west of the line is perceptible and often palpable, especially when it appears empty, and it's that apparent emptiness which makes matter look alone, exiled, and unconnected.... But as the space diminishes man and his constructions in a material fashion it also—paradoxically—makes them more noticeable.

Things show up out here. The terrible distances eat up speed. Even dawn takes nearly an hour just to cross Texas.¹⁰⁹

Bodies in the frame, which are simultaneously diminished and exaggerated within the vast space of the West, disrupt the horizon of the landscape and the history, forcing a reconsideration of landscape's traditional perspectival function in depictions of the West.

In the last thirty years, there has been a veritable explosion of literature devoted to theorizing landscape and tourism, but most of the early studies, of which John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (1st ed., 1990) is the benchmark, situate landscape and the tourist destination as the subject of the tourist's gaze; that is, the location is presented as a closed site to be encountered by the tourist primarily through vision. In this construction of the tourist location, the site is the object, while the tourist is the decentralized and objective observer. This perspectival relationship between landscape and observer is recreated and disseminated by popular representations of nature that emphasize the view and the viewer as completely separate, as John Wylie explains:

Perspectival techniques of landscape depiction allowed artistic representation to approximate the realities of perceptual experience, by offering on the canvas a 'realistic' and plausible portrayal of the visible world. In this way, the idea of landscape is linked to notions of visual observation, detachment and objective knowledge.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Wallace Stegner, *The American West as Living Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), 27.

¹¹⁰ Wylie, 144.

For many tourists, their horizon of expectations is conditioned by these very “perspectival techniques of landscape depiction” that are popular in travel books and Hollywood Westerns, and such tourists anticipate a particular sensory experience when they come to Tombstone, one that allows them to encounter both landscape and history from a comfortable aesthetic distance. As figures 1.13 and 1.14 demonstrate, the inclination toward perspectival representation can be seen in both historical and contemporary tourist photography of Tombstone.

However, focusing exclusively on vision as the aggregator of touristic experience dismisses the importance of embodiment and space in tourism, and recent studies of tourism (including Urry’s second edition of *The Tourist Gaze*, 2002) have recognized this fact and now strive for a theorization of tourism that takes into account the importance of the body in the tourist encounter. Geographer David Crouch, who advances a more embodied approach to tourist theory, maintains that tourism is “an encounter with space and...made through space. [It] is a practice that is made in the process.”¹¹¹ When tourism becomes a process rather than a product, it is because visitors are encountering the landscape of the tourist site in a less aestheticized, more affective way. Wylie suggests that this happens when a landscape is experienced spatially rather than perspectively. “Divested of assumptions regarding observation, distance and spectatorship,” he explains, “the term landscape ceases to define a way of seeing, an epistemological standpoint, and instead becomes potentially expressive of being-in-the-world itself: landscape as a milieu of engagement and involvement. Landscape as ‘lifeworld,’ as a world to live in, not a scene to view.”¹¹² It is this kind of landscape that is engendered by a touristic visit to Tombstone—the

¹¹¹ David Crouch, “Surrounded by Place: Embodied Encounters,” in *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, ed. Simon Coleman and Mike Crang (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 207.

¹¹² Wylie, 149.



Figure 1.13: Allen Street. Tombstone, Arizona, 1882. No photo credit given.

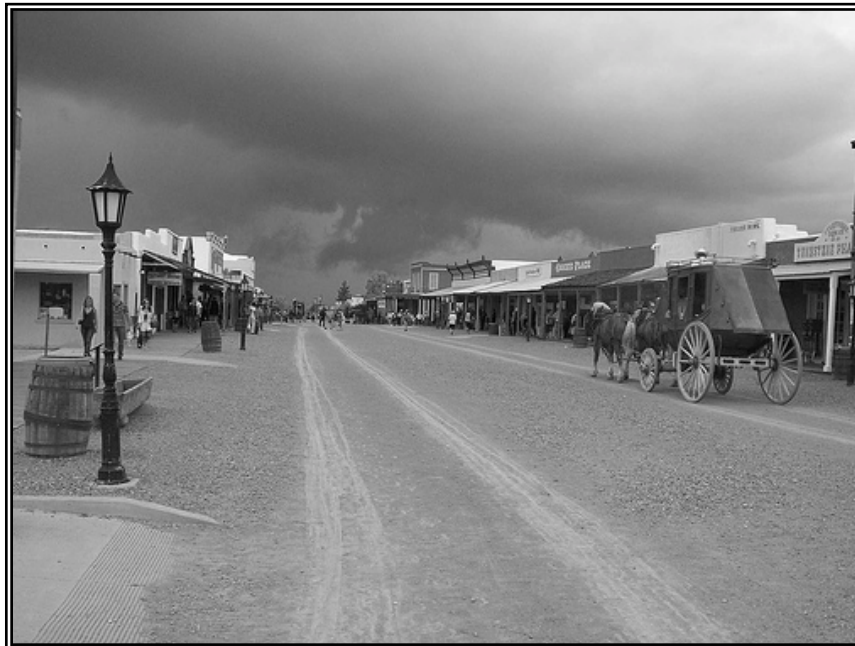


Figure 1.14: Allen Street. Tombstone, Arizona, 2010. Photograph by Gerald Huth.

tourist is sensorially overwhelmed by being *in* the space of the West, making it impossible to step back and view the town perspectively.

When Wylie talks of landscape as “lifeworld,” he borrows from phenomenological theorists who emphasize the importance of experience as embodied. In particular, he seizes on Merleau-Ponty’s theory of the *intertwining* of the senses, in which vision itself is embodied, and experience is neither ahistorical nor subjective, but rather engendered by bodied encounters. In Merleau-Ponty’s use, intertwining also encapsulates the doubleness of being; as Wylie explains, intertwining:

Capture[s] the way in which self and landscape relate to each other. As my body is both observer and observed, seer and seen, its relations with the visible world intertwine in a double movement of separating and joining. Joining because *I can be seen*, I am part of the visible landscape. Separation because I *see*; as Michel De Certeau remarks “we cannot open our eyes to things without distancing ourselves from what we seek.

Separation is the price of vision.”¹¹³

The tourist body participates in this intertwining, which explains the individual tourist’s encounter with the landscape of a historical site as a push and pull, a seeing and a being seen. Our physical and ideological distance (perhaps even estrangement) from the past makes this intertwining of historical space and present body possible (and enjoyable). Lowenthal suggests such anachronism is required for touristic pleasure: “The remoteness of the past is for us a part of

¹¹³ Wylie, 151-52. Wylie’s take on Merleau-Ponty is widely regarded by scholars of tourism to be troubling and highly debatable, as de Certeau and Merleau-Ponty are part of distinctly different and often contradictory philosophical traditions. Although it may not accurately reflect the gist of Merleau-Ponty’s general *oeuvre*, I think it is nevertheless a useful and interesting reading of the two theorists against one another. I am thankful to Sally Ann Ness for her advice in working through this fraught relationship.

its charm. ‘We want to relive those thrilling days of yesteryear,’ says a critic, ‘but only because we are absolutely assured that those days are out of reach.’”¹¹⁴

This intertwining aids in the creation of performative space by allowing the tourist to understand herself as being both spectator and performer in the landscape. The space of Tombstone thus functions simultaneously as a material embodiment of mediatized representations of the Wild West and as a backdrop against which tourists can enact their own fantasies of a particular national past. As a being-in-the landscape, the tourist is both performer and spectator, receiver of a narrated past and constructor of his own version of that past. The tourist body both belongs and does not belong in the space: as indicator of the site’s status as a tourist draw, the tourist body (or many tourist bodies) reaffirms the site’s position as worthy of such attention, increasing the efficacy and legitimacy of the site. The body can also, however, subvert or disrupt that efficacy by not belonging—by interfering with the structured historical “landscape” that curators try to maintain.

Alongside the tourist body, there are other bodies that may or may not disrupt the perspectival view of tourist landscapes like Tombstone: the people who Andrew Causey calls the “tourate,” or those who occupy the “utopic” or liminal space of vacation destinations and interact with tourists.¹¹⁵ In Tombstone, tourate bodies problematize simple notions of bodies that belong in the frame: while many people who provide for the hospitality needs of visitors to Tombstone dress like hotel clerks, servers, and drivers anywhere else in the West, many, perhaps most, are in costumes that recall the glory days of the Wild West. To complicate matters further, many of

¹¹⁴ Lowenthal, 4.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Causey, *Hard Bargaining in Sumatra: Western Travelers and Toba Bataks in the Marketplace of Souvenirs* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 31.

these costumed workers seem to be wearing the costume (and facial hair) out of a personal desire to connect with the space rather than an imperative of employment.

Tombstone, like Williamsburg and Nauvoo, attracts an inordinate number of retirees who, at least temporarily, settle in the town in order to have a prolonged, individually imaged encounter with the space of the historical tourist site, and who are willing to provide their own costumes in order to enhance this encounter. One such couple that I met, Gabby and Carol, have made a life together as costumed *flâneurs* at Old West tourist towns (fig. 1.15). Gabby and Carol have no affiliation with the town of Tombstone other than living there for several months every year; they wander the streets, chat with tourists and other *flâneurs*, or pause to have their photo taken. Others, like the guide at The Bird Cage Theatre Museum, are officially employed by tourist sites or entertainment companies within Tombstone, but are nevertheless responsible for providing their own costumes (and again, facial hair), which they wear everyday, in and out of the workplace (fig. 1.16). Such people also appear to be performing a historical identity as a way to further control their own encounters with the tourist space.

Tombstone is full of wanderers like Gabby, Carol, and the Bird Cage tour guide who blur the line between tourist and tourate and complicate my previous definition of what and who belongs in the frame of the perspectival landscape. But by engaging in costumed role-play, such people, who function as both tourist and tourate, actually position themselves as part of the landscape—they “fit in” to the picture and enhance the image of Tombstone as an embodiment of history. Other members of the tourate do not blend in so easily—the non-costumed workers that keep Tombstone’s restaurants, hotels, and bars running. The simplest way to recognize who



Figure 1.15: Carol (left) and Gabby McDonald, Old West *flâneurs*. Tombstone, Arizona, May 15, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.



Figure 1.16: Guide at The Birdcage Theatre Museum. Tombstone, Arizona, May 16, 2010.
 Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

belongs in the frame and who does not is to watch tourists with their cameras—who do they want to remain in the photo, and who do they insist move outside the frame? Costumed interpreters and reenactors become part of the landscape, increasing authenticity of the Western milieu, while other bodies of the tourate are erased from the photographic record of the tourist trip because they interrupt the idealized landscape many tourists are attempting to capture on film.

This notion of the tourate body that fits in to the landscape is part of a long tradition of perspectival representation of bodies that enhance, rather than interrupt, the Western landscape. The Western landscape, as depicted by artists such as Curtis and Frederic Remington, often featured bodies that belong—those of American Indians, cowboys, and ranchers. These figures, however, do not serve to make the painting or photograph more embodied; on the contrary, the

bodies are perspectivalized, placed into the landscape. They perform as yet another component of Western space, and become the subject of the gaze, reduced to an element of the scene. Similarly, this is what happens to many of those tourate bodies that “belong” in contemporary tourist photographs of Tombstone: they disappear; they become part of the *mise-en-scène* of Allen Street, functioning as the *revenant* of the historical (Anglo) bodies that inhabited the town. Nevertheless, there are possibilities for slippage. Although tourists may walk away from their trip to Tombstone with carefully orchestrated and authentic-looking photographs of Allen Street and its environs, the presence of actual bodies (both tourist and tourate) means that this spatial imagining is necessarily complicated by the reality of the embodied interactions that tourism entails.

It is here, in the embodied experience of landscape, that the possibility of touristic agency resides. The landscape imperative, W.J.T. Mitchell suggests, “is a kind of mandate to withdraw, to draw out by drawing back from a site. If a landscape, as we say, ‘draws us in’ with its seductive beauty, this movement is inseparable from a retreat to a broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance.”¹¹⁶ Mitchell’s definition certainly reflects the most common meaning of “landscape,” but since landscape can actually be separated from this “imperative” and considered as a lifeworld, a world to live in, touristic encounters can provide a challenge to the West as *landscape*—it doesn’t have to be something to “draw back” from and view from an aestheticizing distance. Through the embodied experience of tourism, the landscape can become a *place* as Doreen Massey defines it: a space that is in flux, a process without a “single, unique

¹¹⁶ W.J.T. Mitchell, Preface to *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2002), viii.

[identity determined by] some long, internalized history.”¹¹⁷ Via the performances of and interactions between tourist and tourate bodies, the primacy of perspectival vision is challenged and Tombstone, synecdochal of the West, shifts from a landscape in the traditional sense to a place in constant creation—marked by its past but created in the present.

Making clear the influence tourism has on contemporary constructions of the mythic West, Christensen claims that the “Wild West” has become “a fantasized place where America’s final shape was wrested away from an arid, jaggedly mountainous terrain to be reborn in guidebooks, photography, calendars, movies, and travel brochures.”¹¹⁸ Undoubtedly, this is to a certain extent an accurate depiction. Nevertheless, the New West and the mythic West are not binary opposites, but are rather in a dialectical relationship, as DeLyser explains:

To assume that a mythic West has existed as an entity separate from some ‘real’ West is to create a false dichotomy and to collapse a complexly intertwined history. In fact, the two can be seen as mutually constitutive, each helping to shape the other, until the people and the landscapes of the ‘actual’ West influenced those of the mythic West and vice versa.¹¹⁹

Though the people of the actual Old West may be long gone, their deeds and reputations continue to haunt the sites associated with them. The space of the actual Old West, though its landscapes and inhabitants have changed, remains intact; as Lefebvre suggests, the events that

¹¹⁷ Doreen Massey, “A Global Sense of Place,” in *Reading Human Geography*, ed. Trevor Barnes and Derek Gregory (London: Arnold, 1997), 322, 323.

¹¹⁸ Christensen, 322.

¹¹⁹ DeLyser, 25-26.

transpired there have marked it.¹²⁰ The placemaking that accompanies the creation and maintenance of Old West tourist towns relies on this ghosted space to function. Tourists, after all, come in order to be haunted.

Coda: Walking as Radical Performance

When “Tombstone’s Main Attraction” first began performances at the O.K. Corral, an important element of Keith’s “interactive theatre” (he is a veteran of Renaissance Fairs) was a preshow walk down Allen Street to the theatre in the Corral. He and the other actors in the show would gather at the eastern end of the street, begin enacting the conflict that would ultimately lead to the shootout, and then lead spectators to the theatre, replicating the famous scene in *Tombstone* in which the Earps and Holliday sweep majestically down the streets of the town, intent on delivering justice. When a new mayor was elected in Tombstone, however, he began to enforce a standing law that disallowed performances in the street without a permit.¹²¹ Keith and his actors continued their street performances (they claim they were denied permits when they applied) and were subsequently arrested by the city marshal.¹²² Keith fought the charges and was eventually acquitted; he discontinued the formal preshow performances, but he still wanders the

¹²⁰ Lefebvre, 37.

¹²¹ Previously, the law was only haphazardly enforced; actors were allowed to perform on the streets as long as they were en route to an indoor performance.

¹²² For an amusing, though patronizing and not terribly flattering, account of Keith’s fight with the City of Tombstone, see “Difference Makers—Stephen Keith,” a segment of *The Colbert Report*, 19 May 2009, <http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/228189/may-19-2009/difference-makers---stephen-keith>.

streets of Tombstone in costume, posing for pictures and spouting lines from the film *Tombstone* (fig. 1.17).¹²³

Utilizing de Certeau's definitions, the mayor's spatial enforcement is strategic, while Keith's continued rebellious walking is tactical.¹²⁴ The law, and the mayor's renewed enforcement of it, asserts the city's power in shaping and determining spatial relationships within



Figure 1.17: Stephen Keith strolling Tombstone's boardwalk as Doc Holliday. Tombstone, Arizona, May 15, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

¹²³ During one of my interviews with Keith, we were standing on the street and were consistently interrupted for photo opportunities. One particular boy, perhaps seven years old, pulled out a toy gun and pointed it at Keith, yelling, "I'm your huckleberry!"—one of the most famous lines from the film.

¹²⁴ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 36-37.

the important central space of Allen and Fremont streets. Tactical space, on the other hand, is defined by the absence of power and must “play on and in a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law.” A tactic, de Certeau suggests, “must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse.”¹²⁵ De Certeau identifies walking as a particularly useful tactic, a way of being both absent and present at once—of creating a trace through disappearing movement. This movement allows the walker a level of embodied agency that would otherwise be unavailable within the spatially constructed confines of strategic space.

Walking is a spatial activity, and the way a tourist site’s space is policed influences and conditions the kinds of tactical walking that are possible there. Tombstone has no central organizing agency that determines how the historical elements are constructed and presented to tourists; aside from an ad-hoc assortment of interested parties (generally the owners of businesses on Allen and Fremont Streets), the city government is the only authority controlling the town’s organization as a tourist site. Because of this, the town functions as an example of what Tim Edensor calls “‘heterogeneous spaces,’ multi-purpose spaces in which a wide range of people and activities co-exist and tourist performances are less constrained geographically and culturally.”¹²⁶ Edensor suggests that heterogeneous spaces are on the opposite end of the spectrum from “enclavic spaces,” which are highly centralized and rigidly policed “bubbles” of

¹²⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹²⁶ Glenn W. Gentry, “Walking With the Dead: The Place of Ghost Walk Tourism in Savannah, Georgia,” *Southeastern Geographer* 47.2 (2007): 224.

tourist experience.¹²⁷ Because Tombstone's main historical thoroughfare remains a vital part of a functioning community, it is, by necessity a heterogeneous space, one crisscrossed by tourists, performers, and residents alike, all with unique goals and intentions.

Walking, of course, is present in both kinds of tourist space, though the type of walking is different in each. In enclavic spaces, walking is often in accordance with established patterns laid out by the site's designers and curators—choreographed movement. Walking in heterogeneous spaces, on the contrary, is “marked by disruption and distraction.” In such spaces, “haphazard features and events disorder the tourist gaze,” making the tourist “an actor in the theatre of the street” rather than “a distanced spectator of manufactured spectacle.”¹²⁸ In Tombstone, it is nearly impossible to walk down the street without encountering costumed tourists or street performers ready for a chat, horse-drawn stagecoaches, loose animals, and bellowing merchants. Additionally, though Allen Street is the primary tourist avenue, nothing constrains a tourist's walking path—one could even avoid Allen Street altogether if one so desired. Tourists thus, through walking in Tombstone, construct their own radical performances, utilizing walking as a tactic to resist whatever spatial organization is present. A Tombstone pedestrian creates performative space through tactical walking; she “moves [sites] about and [s]he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform, or abandon spatial elements.”¹²⁹

Performers, costumed visitors, and more traditional tourists all “move sites” and “invent others,” creating their own spatio-performative experience of the town by walking through it,

¹²⁷ Tim Edensor, “Staging Tourism: Tourists as Performers,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 27.2 (2000): 328-31.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹²⁹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 98.

whether their movement is an interactive stroll (Keith), costumed *flânerie* (Gabby and Carol), or casual touristic browsing. Walking, de Certeau argues, “is to lack a place [and] is the indefinite process of being absent.”¹³⁰ Pedestrians in Tombstone become absent while they walk, which allows for the process of imaginative placemaking to occur: because they lack a firm place, tourists can imagine themselves moving back through time and can engage with the past and the myth of the Wild West on a visceral level. Through radical performances of tactical walking, tourists can indeed “walk where they fell”—or refuse the haunting that this sign mandates (fig. 1.18).



Figure 1.18: “Walk Where They Fell.” Sign outside of the O.K. Corral. Tombstone, Arizona, May 15, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 103.

Although curators in Tombstone attempt to control the performative space of the historical town by embodying a mythical Wild West, tourist experience is ultimately created through the distinct experiences and imaginings of individual tourists. Virtually every visitor who comes to Tombstone has her own unique spatial map or expectation for how the space should perform the past and how the place of the Wild West is constructed. She therefore has the tools necessary to contest the spatial and performed genealogy offered by the site's curators, of the Wild West has indelibly influenced characterizations of the US past, and embodied touristic encounters serve as both reaffirmations of and challenges to that received myth, enabling tourists to construct their own understanding of the history of the US West.

Chapter 2

Who's/Whose History?: Performing Black Experience in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia

The Lesser Known had a favorite hole. [...] A Big Hole. A theme park. With historical parades. The size of the hole itself was enough to impress any Digger but it was the Historicity of the place the order and beauty of the pageants which marched by them the Greats on parade in front of them. [...] The Hole and its Historicity and the part he played in it all gave a shape to the life and posterity of the Lesser Known that he could never shake.

—Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*

The Greats on parade in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia include several of the men most associated with the American Revolution and the founding of the United States of America.

Visitors may, over the course of a few days bump into George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, or the Marquis de Lafayette. Dressed in fine silks and brocades carefully equipped with appropriate period details, these characters are one of Colonial Williamsburg's primary draws: come to the town, meet the Founding Fathers. First-person interpreters playing these famous men mingle among those playing other, more minor, historical figures and kids dressed in the standard-issue rented garb of a child of the revolution. Girls are provided with a dress, sash, and bonnet, while boys are given a shirt, satchel, tri-cornered hat,

and a wooden rifle. The costumes, Colonial Williamsburg's website promises, will help any child "get into character" and make the stories told at the site "more relevant and more real."¹

Indeed, making the tourist experience more relevant and more real is a constant goal at Colonial Williamsburg, one that is attempted by relying on archival and archaeological evidence to support historical programming and an increasing attention to visitor engagement through the careful deployment of theatricality in order to represent the "whole" of history. It is this juxtaposition of the archival and archaeological holes of history with the supposed Whole of History – the assumption that, given enough time, space, and resources, historians could eventually construct a cohesive, coherent, and complete history—that Suzan-Lori Parks is alluding to in her description of the Lesser Known's favorite hole. What is left unsaid, and yet screaming from the earth, in this description is that the Lesser Known's own progenitors are nowhere to be found in the historical pageant and that, no matter how deep he digs, that Big Hole will not give up its clues about his own past. The holes within the whole represent irrecoverable pasts that have been occluded, covered up, and just plain ignored for so long that they have left little archival or archaeological evidence of their existence. Although these now phantom traces may have disappeared or gone deep underground, their impact on the present nevertheless continues to be felt; absences, especially those we cannot see or put on as a costume, affect the ultimate shape of our lives and posterity in ways we cannot shake.

Heritage tourist sites such as Colonial Williamsburg rely heavily on the traces of the past, building a whole picture on what comes out of the material and textual holes of history. These sites establish their reputation on the meticulous digging into the past that underpins and

¹ "Costume Rentals," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed November 16, 2012, <http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/do/shop/costume-rentals/>.

legitimizes their buildings, pageants, artifacts, and educational programming. It is not, however, just the first and second-person interpreters that perform history; the very space of Colonial Williamsburg performs as well. In each of these embodied, spatial, and material performances, there is a palpable absence: while white historical figures and spaces are imbued with multiple potentialities, black historical figures and spaces are simultaneously elided and spectacularized, flattening a multiplicity of experiences and ways of moving through the world into a few modes of “black experience.” I want to expose how this seemingly paradoxical treatment creates representative performances and historical spaces of black experience at Colonial Williamsburg that then circumscribe the tourist “roles” made available to black and mixed race visitors to the site.

The term and concept of “black experience” by necessity subjugates the infinite number of personal, very specific experiences had by persons of African descent in the English colony of Virginia and in the later United States of America. In using this term, I draw upon Harvey Young, who argues “not that all black people have the same experience,” but “that a remarkable similarity, a repetition with a difference, exists among embodied black experiences.”² Young bases this claim on the fact that many, if not all, black Americans have had certain spectacular experiences in which individuals are made to stand in metonymically for the whole of black experience (*a* black body becomes *the* black body). These “moments of experiential overlap,” Young argues, “frequently create common and, perhaps, shared understandings among black folk of the *similar* ways in which they are viewed and treated within society despite their differences

² Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 5.

from one another.”³ In the case of Colonial Williamsburg, these moments also position black museum interpreters and visitors as those who are often absented from the embodied history or made to fit prescribed roles based on racialized identities.

In this chapter, I take US chattel slavery, the racialized encounters endured by free blacks in colonial times, and the subsequent attempts to represent these social relations in contemporary living history museums as spectacular experiences that can create “moments of experiential overlap” for both the historical persons being represented and contemporary museum visitors. There are, I argue, particular social and spatial relations that shape racial interactions both in colonial-era and contemporary Williamsburg, and that these relations and the spectacular experiences they engender provoke certain “black experiences” that emphasize the “similar ways in which [black folk] are viewed and treated,” both historically and in the present.

These spectacular experiences, Henri Lefebvre reminds us, are always implicated in and engendered by the production of a particular space associated with a society or community: “schematically speaking, each society offers up its own peculiar space, as it were, as an ‘object’ for analysis and overall theoretical explication. I say each society, but it would be more accurate to say each mode of production, along with its specific relations of production.”⁴ Contemporary Colonial Williamsburg, as a living history museum, a heritage tourist site, and a private, not-for-profit educational institution, is fabricated by multiple and intertwining relations of production. The colonial village of Williamsburg likewise was engendered by an interdependent web of economic and spatial forces; however, the relations of production and the evocation of space

³ Ibid.

⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Blackwell, 1991), 31.

created by and through the institution of chattel slavery structured daily domestic, public, and economic life perhaps more than any other set of relations.

The institution of slavery remains an influential element in the relations of production that shape contemporary Colonial Williamsburg. In an attempt to increase accuracy and offer a more thorough picture of the past, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF) has, over the last thirty-five years, expanded its performance and spatial offerings to provide a better look at the lives that slaves and free blacks may have lived in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg. Such performances reflect both the relations of production found in eighteenth-century Williamsburg and those found in the twenty-first-century town; problematically, some of these performances tread a perilously fine line between offering a deeper, more complete picture of the past and repeating the compulsory performances of race that have long shaped public perception of black experience.⁵

The conditions of spatial and performative experience that structure living history performance and spectatorship—the theatricality that allows for a visit to the past—can serve both to invite visitors into the foreign country of the past and to reaffirm the distance between the privilege of the spectator and the vulnerability of the performer. Josette Féral explains that theatricality requires an adaption of *spatial* relations:

More than a property with analyzable characteristics, theatricality seems to be a *process* that has to do with a “gaze” that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other. [...] This act creates a cleft in

⁵ For a discussion of compulsory performances and their effect on black subjectivity, see Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

the quotidian that becomes the space of the other. [...] It clears a passage, allowing both the performing subject as well as the spectator to pass from “here” to “elsewhere.”⁶

This process of “othering” the space of a performed encounter both creates the theatrical space necessary for the performed encounter and serves to further distance the spectator or visitor from the performer. One of the questions that this chapter explores is how such a mode of production simultaneously creates emancipatory performances and spatial encounters for visitors and museum personnel while still, necessarily, reiterating tropes and stereotypes of racialized difference.

The chapter begins with an examination of Colonial Williamsburg’s archaeological holes. Reading the site through a frame of “theatrical thinking,” I consider how progressive historiography and an investment in certain types of archives serve to limit and truncate the history presented. In the following section, I explore the haunted nature of the objects and bodies on display in present-day Colonial Williamsburg, tracing the thread of non-archival history through the ghostly returns of repressed memories. The next section situates performative space within the theatrical thinking that structures the site and examines the metaphorical and physical location of black history at Colonial Williamsburg. Finally, I look at the scriptive roles available to black performers and visitors at the present-day site and investigate the genealogies of performance that influence those available roles.

While Suzan-Lori Parks pokes in and out of the holes of history and challenges the veracity and usefulness of “the Greats on parade,” tourist Bob Rohrbacher holds a different view

⁶ Josette Féral, “Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language,” *SubStance* 31.2/3 (2002): 97, 98.

of the potential good that can be enacted through “the Historicity of [a] place...and beauty of the pageants.” Speaking about an undefined “they,” a group of US citizens who either legitimately do not know or simply do not view US history through the same lens that he does, Rohrbacher argues that “they should all come here and listen...They’ve forgotten about America.”⁷ Implied in his accusation is a conservative worldview that champions a certain vision of the Founding Fathers as infallible and almost demi-godlike, possessing answers to difficult questions that citizens of the United States still face. While scholars have long argued that forgetting is a direct and necessary corollary to remembering, each of views demonstrates the politics and passion at the heart of what is remembered and what is forgotten. Each also gets to the questions that sit at the heart of this chapter: whose history is worth preserving and how do we go about remembering it?

Archaeologies of Remembrance

In the early twentieth century, Reverend Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin, rector of Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, Virginia, approached John D. Rockefeller, Jr., heir to the Standard Oil fortune, with a proposition: with Goodwin’s commitment and Rockefeller’s money, they would preserve what was left and restore what had been destroyed of the “one remaining Colonial village” in the United States.⁸ The pair quietly bought up as much of the historical portion of the city as possible before residents began to take notice of the rapidly disappearing real estate; they then began meticulously restoring the buildings, relying on carefully scrutinized historical

⁷ Bob Rohrbacher, quoted in Amy Gardner, “‘Tea Party’ Activists Drawn to Williamsburg and its Portrayal of Founding Fathers,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 2010, accessed August 5, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/31/AR2010073103051.html>

⁸ Philip Kopper, *Colonial Williamsburg* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 149.

documents and architectural plans (fig. 2.1). Part of this attention to detail was an attempt at preemptive protection from criticism and embarrassment: “No scholar,” Rockefeller said, “must ever be able to come to us and say we made a mistake.”⁹

The preservation and restoration was an attempt to materialize the ghostly past of the colonial United States, a past that Goodwin could easily imagine before reconstruction took place. “If you have ever walked around Williamsburg lake on a moonlight night,” he writes, “when most of the people...are fast asleep, and felt the presence and companionship of the



Figure 2.1: W.A.R. Goodwin (left) and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. behind the George Wythe House, 1926. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

⁹ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., quoted in Kopper, 228.

people who used to live here in the long gone years, and remembered the things they stood for, and pictured them going into or coming out of the old houses...you would then know what an interesting place Williamsburg is.”¹⁰

The presences that Goodwin refers to are not the past everyday inhabitants of the colonial village, but its rather more illustrious former citizens: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Wythe, and Peyton Randolph among them. Indeed, Goodwin’s imagining of Williamsburg’s storied past has established the frame for most of the site’s historical programming, a frame which champions a progressive narrative rooted in a celebration of US exceptionalism as embodied by the great men who haunted the crumbling colonial structures. Colonial Williamsburg would, in Rockefeller’s words, “teach of the patriotism, purpose, and unselfish devotion of our forefathers to the common good.”¹¹ In a 1951 *Guidebook*, the pillars of this patriotic exceptionalism are made plain: Colonial Williamsburg celebrated the values of “the integrity of the individual,” “responsible leadership,” “self-government,” “individual liberties,” and “opportunity.”¹²

The framing of Colonial Williamsburg as a place that uniquely embodies a kind of historic US exceptionalism has been and continues to be an exercise in what Patricia Ybarra has termed “theatrical thinking.”¹³ Always with an eye toward audience reaction (whether of

¹⁰ W.A.R. Goodwin, *Bruton Parish Church Restored and Its Historic Environment* (1907), quoted in Jay Anderson, *Time Machines: The World of Living History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), 30

¹¹ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., quoted in Donald Garfield, “Too Real for Comfort,” *Museum News* 74.1 (January-February 1995): 8.

¹² Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 64.

¹³ Patricia Ybarra, “Mexican Theater History and Its Discontents: Politics, Performance, and History in Mexico,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 70.1 (March 2009): 133.

scholars, as Rockefeller feared, or of tourists, as he and Goodwin hoped), the founders of Colonial Williamsburg situated the past theatrically through place as a way of controlling and disseminating historical memory. Initially imagined as a sort of living stage set, the buildings were preserved and restored, streets were returned to a “colonial” state of being,¹⁴ and the space of the historical district became a romanticized recreation of an imagined national past—no longer squalid ruins among the trappings of modern life, it morphed into a spatio-performative time machine that, through the magic of theatrical space, allows visitors to inhabit the picturesque places of US history.

Theatrical thinking further infused the space when, in 1934, costumed hostesses were introduced for President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s visit to the site. This move proved so successful with visitors that, within a year, costumes were made mandatory for all hostesses in exhibition buildings; throughout the 1930s, costumed employees—almost always representing the landed gentry—proliferated all of Colonial Williamsburg’s public spaces (fig. 2.2).¹⁵ Over the following decades, the costumes evolved, evidencing the CWF’s increased attention to historical accuracy in terms of style, color, and material. Indeed, the costumed hostesses, eventually joined by male hosts and renamed “interpreters,” present some of the clearest evidence of theatrical thinking at work at Colonial Williamsburg. Not only are the buildings and spaces presented as a stage whereupon history continues to be written and rewritten, people are presented as props to further the visitor’s illusionistic (and, ideally, educational) experiences.

¹⁴ The streets and buildings were actually kept in “too good” of repair for many years; in the 1970s, social historians pushed for a “dirtier, more accurate past.” Scott Magelssen makes much of the “road apples” (horse manure) left in the streets that signified this shift. Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History Through Performance* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 30, 77.

¹⁵ 75th Anniversary Timeline, *Colonial Williamsburg Costume Design Center*, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed December 13, 2011, <http://www.history.org/history/clothing/designcenter/timeline>.

The interpreters also, however, reveal the tension that is at the heart of a marriage between theatrical thinking and heritage tourism: the push and pull between the theatricality of carefully articulated *mise-en-scène* and the antitheatricality articulated by historians and museum curators who insist on a clear generic distinction between theatre or performance and “living history.”¹⁶ Interpreters whom I interviewed repeatedly insisted that they are not actors but rather “representatives” or “interpreters” of the historical character that they embody.¹⁷ Although plays



Figure 2.2: Hostesses in 1750s-era dresses at Colonial Williamsburg, 1935. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

¹⁶ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

¹⁷ Emily James, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 17, 2011; Sam Wilson, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 17, 2011; interview with third-person costumed interpreter, Governor’s Palace, Williamsburg, VA, June 25, 2010; interview with third-person costumed interpreter, weaver, Colonial Williamsburg, VA, June 25, 2010.

and theatrical entertainments are offered at Colonial Williamsburg, they are both advertised and described as different from the other apparently non-theatrical performed presentations that form the core of the site's historical programming.¹⁸ Interpreters are presented as an embodiment of historical and material evidence (down to the "period" buttons and stitching patterns that hold an interpreter's waistcoat together) that is supported by the archive of historical objects and research that underpins Colonial Williamsburg's disciplinary rigor and distances its performed programs from "theatre": the presentations that interpreters offer are avowedly *not* theatre, and *not* theatrical, but are instead historical demonstrations or interpretations.

This insistence on a distinction between performance and living history echoes tired antitheatricalist arguments which attempt to reestablish the unhelpful binary that Diana Taylor takes up as her subject in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Although Taylor attempts to destabilize the "rift" between the "archive and the repertoire," which she defines as two modes of knowledge production, her division actually serves to reinforce the distinction between the two, positioning the archive as that which is stable and endures and the repertoire as that which is fluid and, though not ephemeral, ever-shifting.¹⁹ Taylor allows that the archive, though given to appear as solid and incorruptible, is actually also subject to political and ideological changes; however, a continued binary opposition between performance and history, or archive and repertoire, is implicit in her linguistic construction.

¹⁸ In particular, the relatively new "street theatre" program *Revolutionary City* is defined as an undertaking separate from the general use of costumed interpreters inside historical buildings. In the official guidebook to *Revolutionary City*, visitor encounters with costumed interpreters are described as "informative," while a description of *Revolutionary City* is described as the product of "applying theatrical disciplines to historical interpretation," clearly marking a difference between the two. *Revolutionary City Guidebook* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2009), 85-86.

¹⁹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 17.

Such an opposition establishes an inherently unequal relationship, with history and the archive on the side of truth and fact and theatricality and performance on the side of illusion and falsity. Such a distinction, however, belies the fundamental reliance each has upon the other, especially at museums and historical tourist sites.²⁰ Performance, and, in particular, theatrical thinking, underlies the strategies of production, presentation, and display of historical buildings, objects, and experiences at Colonial Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg's reliance on the legitimizing power of the archive does not inoculate it against theatricality; on the contrary, a dependence on the archive ensures the centrality of performance to the construction of meaning. Rebecca Schneider, working through Derrida's concept of a *coup de théâtre* at the heart of the archive, explains this further, arguing that the archive itself is "another kind of performance":

Much as a dramatic script is given to remain for potential future production, or dance steps may be housed in bodily training for acts requiring dancers, materials in the archive are given, too, for the *future* of their (re)enactment. Here it becomes clear: the theatricality of this equation, even the performative bases of the archive, is that it is a house of and for performative repetition, not stasis.²¹

Thus what was preserved in the archives and archival spaces of Colonial Williamsburg, particularly by Goodwin and Rockefeller, was that which was intended for future reproduction and reenactment. While, in this definition, the archive bears within it the seeds of its own

²⁰ For an extended discussion of the performative nature of objects displayed in museum settings, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), esp. 17-78.

²¹ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 108.

deconstruction (“this is a dramatic turn at once essential to the archive but simultaneously destructive of its very tenet: that it preserves the past *as past*”²²), it nevertheless constrains what stories can be told at sites like Colonial Williamsburg.

Although Colonial Williamsburg was conceived and spent its early years as what Karen Till calls a “national place of memory” that was “created and understood as glorifying the pasts of ‘a people,’”²³ the living history museum has spent the last thirty-five years trying to recover at least some of the history that was forgotten, occluded, or purposefully absented from the celebratory narrative that first shaped its purpose and programming. Since its opening, the museum’s architectural, historical, and performance endeavors have been navigated by thematic “paradigms” that emphasize a particular way of viewing Colonial Williamsburg’s meaning within the narrative of the founding of the United States. These paradigm shifts in programming reflected changes in the society; for the first two decades, programming was shaped by a “Colonial paradigm,” which was replaced in the 1950s by a “Cold War” or “Patriotic paradigm.”²⁴ This focus on a patriotic interpretation of history became more diffuse following the seismic cultural upheavals of the 1960s, leading to the “Six Appeals” paradigm, which outlined an educational-corporate plan for attracting visitors according to the most six most popular aspects of the museum, including the architecture and archaeological sites present. In the late 1970s, the museum began hiring social historians to help it create a more diverse performed picture of colonial life, one which moved beyond a focus on “silk pants patriots,” and integrated

²² Ibid., 109.

²³ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9.

²⁴ Handler and Gable, 61.

more of the experiences of the ninety percent of Williamsburg inhabitants who were not landed gentry and had therefore been largely excluded from earlier interpretations of the site.²⁵

Reflecting this movement toward a multiplicity of historical perspectives, the CWF decided on several narrative themes that would structure the performances and programs offered in the Historic District. Although the CWF's corporate and historical paradigms have changed slightly, today's Colonial Williamsburg is shaped in much the same way as that of the 1970s, with its programming determined by a "master plan" now entitled "Becoming Americans: Our Struggle To Be Both Free and Equal."²⁶ Within this master plan, there are six "storylines" that CWF historians and curators use to guide programming choices: "Taking Possession," which explores the settling of the Chesapeake Bay and early colonists' interactions with the Indians who were already settled in the area; "Enslaving Virginia," which considers the trans-Atlantic slave trade, its entrenchment in Virginia, and the lives of colonial blacks, both free and enslaved; "Buying Respectability," which examines pivotal role that economic self-interest played in the fashioning of colonial identities, especially in terms of the material culture the museum is built upon; "Redefining Family," which investigates the many different familial structures that were present in Colonial Virginia; "Choosing Revolution," which interrogates the various economic, social, and philosophical considerations that lead individuals to join the Revolutionary cause; and "Freeing Religions," which looks at how the ideal of religious freedom was enacted and

²⁵ Ibid., 65-6. For a more complete analysis of the several corporate and not-for-profit iterations of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, as well as the managerial paradigms that shaped each iteration, see Kopper, *Colonial Williamsburg*; and Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg: The Restoration of Virginia's Eighteenth-Century Capital*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²⁶ "Historical Research at Colonial Williamsburg," *Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site*, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed December 12, 2011, http://research.history.org/Historical_Research.cfm.

truncated in the early colonies.²⁷ These various storylines represent an attempt to create a more inclusive historical discourse, and emerged from the desire on the part of the CWF's social historians to reject "the traditional notion that rulers are more important than ruled, that might confers the right to be remembered, or that money does all the talking historians need to listen to."²⁸

Although the CWF's move toward a more inclusive historiography reflects an admirable attempt to revise some of the historical errors that plague living history museums in general and Colonial Williamsburg in particular, Richard Handler and Eric Gable argue that this shift does not actually represent a fundamental change in historiographical method, merely a change in interpretation. This new "social science" paradigm, they suggest, is simply another "ideology. And social science as an ideology fits easily into an ethos that had been part of Colonial Williamsburg's culture from the beginning: a faith that ongoing historical research would uncover more and more facts, and make possible an ever more complete and accurate re-creation of the past." They consider this view to be characteristic of a "puzzle" view of history: the notion that history is composed of minute fragments waiting to be discovered and assembled into a cohesive whole by an intrepid explorer.²⁹ The CWF reaffirms the idea of the historian as conqueror and history as discoverable when it suggests that Colonial Williamsburg "historians

²⁷ "Recommended Readings," *Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site*, accessed December 12, 2011, http://research.history.org/Historical_Research/Recommended_Readings.cfm.

²⁸ Cary Carson, "Living Museums of Everyman's History," *Harvard Magazine* 83 (July-August 1981): 25.

²⁹ Handler and Gable, 70.

must be prepared to navigate *terrae incognitae*, the unknown pasts that await discovery when public interest turns curious about subjects that scholars have not yet explored.”³⁰

The use of the term *terrae incognitae* anchors historical discovery, and, in turn, historical discourse, in the earth, a reality and a metaphor that is particularly apt for this site. From its inception, Colonial Williamsburg has located its authority in architecture born(e) out of archaeology; it uses the material remnants of buildings and objects as puzzle pieces that can build a more comprehensive picture of the past. Archaeological digs take place continuously at the site, and, along with the performed interpretations and traditional museums, remain a linchpin in both Colonial Williamsburg’s claims of legitimacy and its educational outreach (fig. 2.3).³¹ Colonial Williamsburg’s emphasis on the reliability and importance of archaeological details emerges in the oft-repeated story about John D. Rockefeller’s insistence that a building that had been reconstructed six feet away from its original foundations must be torn down and *re-reconstructed* on the proper site.³² This reliance on material evidence, however, provides not just mere objective material to be interpreted, but rather *both* the raw material of history and the method by which such material is interpreted.

³⁰ “Historical Research at Colonial Williamsburg.”

³¹ The Department of Architectural and Archaeological Research at Colonial Williamsburg works closely with the National Parks Service to sustain and curate archaeological excavations; archaeologists and other professionals are invited to intern at these excavations. “Archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg,” *Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site*, accessed December 13, 2011, http://research.history.org/Archaeological_Research.cfm. Additionally, the excavations are presented for public instruction on the exacting methods used to verify Colonial Williamsburg’s stylistic and programming choices. When I visited Colonial Williamsburg in September 2011, an excavation near James Anderson’s Blacksmith Shop and Armory was underway. Placards explained the process of archaeological excavation and the historiographical methods of deriving historical facts from the material remnants.

³² Handler and Gable, 34.



Figure 2.3: A costumed interpreter visits the Ravenscroft archaeological excavation. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

The archaeological holes of Colonial Williamsburg’s history both yield and shape the permissible whole of that history, functioning as genesis and archive of historically relevant information, a discursive process Michel Foucault engages with in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.³³ Anything that comes out of the holes is worth preserving and interpreting; anything that does not simply doesn’t exist. Colonial Williamsburg’s archive, its holes, “defines... the system of its enunciability,” echoing the archival processes Foucault outlines. “The archive,” he claims,

is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an

³³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (Pantheon Books, New York, NY, 1972), 129.

amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct features.³⁴

The archive thus determines not only what can (or ought to be) preserved, but also what can be said about what is preserved and how its meaning is articulated.

In Colonial Williamsburg, Goodwin and Rockefeller determined early on what they expected to find in the hollowed-out old buildings and unyielding ground of Williamsburg, Virginia; they knew what they were looking for before they found it. Based on Goodwin's hope that a reconstructed Williamsburg would help visitors "feel the presence and companionship" of the founders and remember "the things they stood for," it is clear that Colonial Williamsburg was meant to be a spatio-performative site that would advance a very particular narrative of the founding of the United States and give evidence of the "great men" whose revolutionary ideals shaped that founding. This expectation produced distinct conditions of historical meaning which turned archaeological finds into ethnographic objects that testified of a predetermined narrative; the objects were, then, axiomatically archived as evidence of the lived experience of patriots.

Such objects, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, are made meaningful by being invested with meaning—they are not evidence in and of themselves, but are rather defined as evidence by the conditions of their discovery. "Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography," she explains. "They are artifacts created by ethnographers. Such objects become ethnographic by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by

³⁴ Ibid.

ethnographers.”³⁵ This predetermination of meaning excludes the presence of those people whose existence was not manifested through the possession of material goods and absents them from the history represented by the archive. Thus, Colonial Williamsburg’s archive, generated and governed by archaeological finds, has long excluded what Odai Johnson has called the “unhistoried voices” of historical persons because these voices are less materially verifiable.³⁶ Because of the exclusion of these voices from the archive, they are excluded from Colonial Williamsburg’s system of articulation.

By marking the archaeological hole as objective and the remnants contained therein uncritically “historical,” curators and historians in Colonial Williamsburg absent from history those whose presence left little or no material trace. Thus, official history becomes *that which remains*, even if only in pieces, and experience that is not materially represented in the archaeological hole is inadmissible as “historical.” In this way, the archaeological hole(s) in Colonial Williamsburg legitimize the archival absence of entire groups of people, particularly those like African and African American slaves who were not materially represented in their own time, and who, more problematically, were legally categorized as possessions: material remnants of someone else’s life rather than their own.

The holes of Colonial Williamsburg shape the history presented at the site not only by their function as makeshift earthen archives, but also by being transformed into performative spaces themselves by theatrical thinking. From its reincarnation in the early twentieth century, Colonial Williamsburg has been structured by an inherently theatrical conceptualization, one that

³⁵ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 17.

³⁶ Odai Johnson, “Unspeakable Histories: Terror, Spectacle, and Genocidal Memory,” in *Theatre Historiography: Critical Interventions*, ed. Henry Bial and Scott Magelssen (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 13.

relies on dramaturgies of discovery and the unearthing of history to legitimize the pedagogical and spatial performances that characterize its unique appeal. The theatrical thinking that inflects Colonial Williamsburg's historical spaces positions all new discoveries as scenes prepared for an already anticipated audience; the reconstructed town provides the *mise-en-scène* for the theatrical framing of discovery as history-in-action. Visitors are invited to approach the archaeological sites, watch the archaeologists and students as they work, and ask questions about the process of uncovering, cataloguing, and interpreting the material remains of the colonial village (fig. 2.4).



Figure 2.4: Visitors (in top left corner) explore the Ravenscroft Archaeological Project, July, 2009.
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Such sites problematize the clear distinctions between the “front” and “back” of a tourist site laid out by Dean MacCannell in his 1976 work *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. According to MacCannell’s division, “the front is the meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons, and the back is the place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and prepare.”³⁷ Based on Erving Goffman’s concept of front and back regions as two poles on a continuum, MacCannell argues that the tourist strives to discover a more authentic “back region” of the site.³⁸ However, such an authentic experience is impossible, as even the back region is itself often staged for tourist consumption.³⁹ More recently, theorists such as Maxine Feifer and John Urry have argued that tourists are not seeking authenticity at all, but rather see themselves as “post-tourists” who consider “authenticity” to be an outdated and unattainable goal and therefore are more interested in the inauthenticity of tourist experience and in negotiating touristic codes of behavior and discovery.⁴⁰

The revealing of the archaeological site allows for a tourist experience that is somewhere in between authentic and inauthentic experience. Because of the theatrical staging of the sites, visitors are constantly aware of their role as audience members. However, the excavations are, indeed, actual archaeological digs, and they are positioned as revelatory of the processes that go into uncovering and interpreting the material history of the site, therefore giving visitors a

³⁷ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 92.

³⁸ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

³⁹ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 99.

⁴⁰ Maxine Feifer, *Tourism in History: From Imperial Rome to the Present* (New York: Stein & Day, 1985); and John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2002).

privileged look into the labor of discovering, creating, and maintaining the ethnographic artifacts that legitimize certain narratives within the museum while simultaneously de-legitimizing others.

The interplay between touristic codes of reality and façade can actually serve to heighten the sense that revelatory truth is being provided by the touristic encounter with the archaeological holes. The degree of intimacy offered by the glimpse of a working dig can seduce visitors with an expectation of permanence and continuity in the face of impermanence and disintegration. The implication of the holes is that historical truth can and will be discovered, constructed, and articulated—all in good time. This teleological belief in a “whole” of history occludes the processes of production that invest archives and holes, as well as the objects that emerge from them, with meaning.

Ghosts and Things: Materializing Colonial Black Experience

Heritage tourism represents an attempt to call forth or materialize that which has disappeared—to re-create the past, often in an attempt to situate a nationalist narrative in a historically evocative landscape. The impetus to conjure buildings, objects, and people who no longer exist and emplace them in an ideal history is made even more ghostly by performance, which, as many theorists have argued, is always already haunted, ghosted by the previous behaviors it repeats and invokes.⁴¹ Place is likewise key to the haunted affect created and maintained by heritage tourist locations, since places are localized and often seen as stable containers of past events, real and imagined, and thus as essentialized preservers of that past. The

⁴¹ See, for example, Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Alice Rayner, *Ghosts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Schneider, *Performing Remains*.

stillness that appears to be inherent to place is what seems to allow for the patriotic conjuration of historical figures and experiences, a “happy haunting” that inspired W.A.R. Goodwin’s vision of a restored Williamsburg. We know, however, that not all hauntings are benign; not all historical memory flows into the narrative containers intended to control it.

In “Unspeakable Histories: Terror, Spectacle, and Genocidal Memory,” Odai Johnson explores the phenomenon of curse tablets in Ancient Rome, the remnants of a society whose brutality and oppression produced a forcible aphasia in the peoples it conquered and enslaved.⁴² The enslaved could not be kept completely silent, however, and Johnson identifies their voices in the curse tablets that can be found buried throughout the lands of the Roman Empire. These tablets, he argues, represent “a thin but enduring subterranean stratum of anger running below the triumphal arches and coliseums, an articulate subsoil littered with the silent and irrepressible rage of its victims.”⁴³

What I wish to show in this section is that spectral evidence of past inhabitants and past modes of production are likewise lingering just below the figurative and literal surface of Colonial Williamsburg’s veneer of restoration, and that these ghosts are materialized through tourist interaction with the objects and stories that are associated with Revolutionary-era Williamsburg’s black inhabitants. Within this context, materialization refers not only to the calling forth and embodying of past inhabitants and experiences, but also to the investment of objects and spaces with racialized meaning. Like the ghost that is visible only to those who are looking, the experiences and histories of black inhabitants of Revolutionary Williamsburg

⁴² Johnson, 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15.

manifest temporally, spatially, and materially in today's Colonial Williamsburg, oozing out of the reconstructed houses and bubbling up from open archaeological pits; and yet, this history is often there only for those who seek it out.

In the previous section, I explored how the very idea of archaeological evidence and the creation of archives can preclude certain unhistoried voices from being heard. Lack of archival traces, however, is not enough to keep these voices silent forever; the affective irruption of black, and especially slave, experience is inevitable when so many of the objects and architectural foundations that are uncovered in Colonial Williamsburg were so intimately connected to the hands that built, washed, and cared for them. While traditionally such objects have been used by museums and historians as evidence of their owners, cannot these objects also testify of those who handled them without possessing them? Although certainly the objects reveal more economic information about their owners, they nevertheless may divulge social truths about the relationship between their owners and their caretakers, becoming "material remnants [that] haunt our imaginations and performances by materializing social relations."⁴⁴ As Till suggests, one of the materializing functions of objects at places of historical memory is to embody the specific production of social relations that characterized a certain time and place; in the case of Colonial Williamsburg, the primary defining social relationship was that of chattel slavery.

In this way, objects testify not only of the presence of the people who lived in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg but also of the absence of many of those people from the historical record. Such objects are therefore doubled, revealing both owner and slave, ghosting the present through the material past. After all, Alice Rayner reminds us, "ghosts arise not from

⁴⁴ Till, *The New Berlin*, 13.

the *idea* of the double but from the perceptible presence of an absence that the double outlines and gives shape to.”⁴⁵ The presence of an absence of enslaved experiences is made perceptible through a simple perceptual shift: when interpreters emphasize or tourists recognize that many, perhaps most, of the artifacts on display would have been made and handled by slaves, the material objects then testify of more than just their owners—they stand as historical witnesses to the experiences of all those who interacted with them. Such a shift is one way that strategic historical tourism can recover, or at least recognize, the unhistoric voices that have been whitewashed in previous accounts of Williamsburg’s historical importance.

Rayner’s conceptualization of the double’s relation to absence is based in part on her reading of Sigmund Freud’s idea of the uncanny, his account of which she calls “a linguistic ghost story.”⁴⁶ Indeed, in “The Uncanny,” Freud traces the ghostly double that haunts the *heimlich*, which he defines as whatever belongs to the house—that which is comfortable, familiar, and not strange. Freud also shows, however, that *unheimlich*, rather than being the binary opposite of *heimlich*, is actually its double: *heimlich* has *unheimlich* within it as well—that which is disconcerting, secretive, “concealed, and kept out of sight.”⁴⁷ The irruption of black experience represented by a recognition of the impact of slave labor on the creation and maintenance of the museum objects and props featured in Colonial Williamsburg’s historical spaces is an example of this uncanny, the ghostly reappearance of history’s double that has long been ignored and concealed.

⁴⁵ Rayner, xxii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII: An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1955), 221-24.

The ghostly doubling engendered by the display of historical objects in Colonial Williamsburg provides evidence for slavery's centrality as an organizing principle of social relations in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg. If objects can provide evidence of the lives and livelihoods of the people who owned them, certainly they can likewise provide evidence of the lives and livelihoods of those who cared for them on a daily basis. Although some of Colonial Williamsburg's most popular programming has to do with major events leading up to the American Revolution, the core of their offerings is comprised of more mundane "living history" performances and explanations of period chores, games, and craftsmanship. Each of these performances of everyday life would have, in the colonial era, been saturated with slave labor; however, in contemporary Colonial Williamsburg, white interpreters almost always perform these tasks (fig. 2.5). Objects and commodity processes are presented as evidence of historical craftsmanship with little or no mention of whom, exactly, would have labored over the object, both in its creation and in its maintenance. A savvy (or even slightly aware) tourist, however, can recognize this dissonance and use the description of the object's genesis and care as a tactic: a way to see the ghostly echoes of the object's history that infuse the material thing being presented. In this way, the discrepancy between the lived reality of colonial-era men and women and their current interpretation allows for the uncanny return of the unhistoried voices of slaves: their very absence is evidence of their existence.

An awareness of this doubling can change a mere object into a *thing*, a transition that emphasizes an object's ultimate indecipherability. "As they circulate through our lives," Bill Brown claims, "we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature,



Figure 2.5: A Blacksmith at Colonial Williamsburg. Williamsburg, Virginia, June 25, 2010.
 Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

or culture—above all, what they disclose about *us*), but we only catch a glimpse of things.”⁴⁸ The traditional museum culture of Colonial Williamsburg positions artifacts as objects, as items that encourage a practice of looking “through.” The haunting that is represented by an upsurge of knowledge about *who* would have made and cared for the object, however, forces a viewer to reexamine the object as a thing, even if only obliquely and even if only for a moment.

The transformation of an object into a thing can be observed in the tour of the Governor’s Palace, one of the most popular house tours offered in Colonial Williamsburg. When I took the tour on September 16, 2011, the white interpreters who guided us through the elegant and imposing space consistently referred to “servants” who would have been present throughout the

⁴⁸ Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (2001): 4.

palace, but particularly in the spaces of domestic preparation such as the kitchen, the pantry, and the bedrooms. Servants, they informed us, would have used the pantry and kitchen to store and prepare meals for the governor, his family, and their guests. In particular, the interpreters emphasized the provenance and importance of the objects on display, many of which were period pieces. The high-quality wine bottles, jelly molds, and coffee pots, the interpreters claimed, provided evidence of the governor's tastes, proclivities, and attempts to impress Williamsburg's inhabitants. What was left unsaid is that these objects were more often handled by slaves than by servants. While these objects certainly reveal something of the tastes and styles of the upper class households that owned them, they also provide material evidence of the daily chores completed by slaves. This upsurge of "thing-ness" can make previously invisible labor suddenly visible to tourists. The obscured knowledge of slaves' presence in the house and in interaction with these objects, which irrupts into the historical narrative being relayed at the site, highlights the transformation from object to thing and the possibility for things to reveal important truths about the past.⁴⁹

As in the uncanny performance of repeating a well-known word until it begins to thicken in the mouth, to turn strange and foreign-sounding even as it remains the same word, the ghosted object can manifest its "thingness" by becoming strange within its ordinariness. The objects within the Governor's Palace kitchen and pantry are used as props in the performances of

⁴⁹ In *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, Robin Bernstein outlines a method of deriving information about historical social relations through a detailed analysis of what she terms "scriptive things," or objects that assert their "thing-ness" through the kinds of behaviors they encouraged their users to perform. Her argument hinges on the assertion that understanding the everyday uses of household objects and the daily performances that those objects suggest (or "script") to users can provide a way, outside the traditional context of the archive, to derive historical knowledge from objects. Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

everyday life that are presented at Colonial Williamsburg, but their thingness becomes clear in the alienation and estrangement they embody in being divorced from their historical and racial contexts. This estrangement—to paraphrase Victor Shklovsky, the dishes become “dishy”—causes the objects to profess themselves representatives of an untold history, illuminating the social relations produced by a slave-owning society.⁵⁰ The objects, doubled by their ghostly pasts, become things. According to Brown, “the story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation.”⁵¹ The things in Colonial Williamsburg’s historical spaces reposition the subjects of the spaces: slaves and masters, tourists and interpreters, forcing contemporary visitors to interact with the facts of chattel slavery in Revolutionary-era America.

Although Colonial Williamsburg has tried to recreate some “black presence sites,” which are populated with objects that their past inhabitants, usually slaves, would have obtained and owned privately, less of an attempt is made to properly characterize the material objects that would have been shared (through creation and care, not through ownership) by black slaves and white masters.⁵² Colonial Williamsburg has created these distinct slave spaces in order to better

⁵⁰ In his essay “Art as Technique,” Victor Shklovsky argues that “the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.” “Art,” he continues, “exists...to make the stone *stony*.” Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1988), 20. I would argue that the ghostly doubling that haunts museum objects at heritage tourist sites provokes a similar response; if perhaps not purposefully or artfully, then in a way of repressed histories returning.

⁵¹ Brown, “Thing Theory,” 4.

⁵² Martha B. Katz-Hyman, “*In the Middle of this Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot*”: *The Material Culture of Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Virginia and the Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 350, 1993), 12, Colonial

depict the everyday and private lives of slaves, which is certainly an admirable goal. However, by creating these so-called “black presence sites,” the CWF spatially and performatively creates an arbitrary and false division between “black” and “white” spaces and objects. In reality, there were very few spaces, especially in an urban area like the one represented by Colonial Williamsburg, that were not inhabited by people of both races. White slaveholders would have had domestic slaves that cared for the white family’s needs in all areas of the house, as Gad J. Heuman and James Walvin explain:

The domestic life of whites was dominated by slave domestics.

Visitors...were struck by the huge numbers of black servants working in and around the homes of white people in the slave colonies. Nannies and nurses, cooks and washers, gardeners and cleaners, each and every conceivable domestic role was undertaken by slaves.⁵³

Public spaces were likewise promiscuous; male gentry slaveholders would have had a manservant who traveled with them everywhere, and most of the shops and public houses would have been manned by slaves and free black workers as well as white proprietors and servants. Spatially embodying the inverse power structure at the core of a slave-owning society, black spaces were also psychically and physically open to the white masters, who were permitted to enter at any time. Likewise complicating the notion of separate black and white “presence sites” is the fact that, although slave codes had long since hardened around racial categories, there were many free blacks in Williamsburg at the time of the Revolution who were permitted to come and

Williamsburg Foundation Digital Library, <http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/View/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports\RR0350.xml#>.

⁵³ Gad J. Heuman and James Walvin, “Introduction to Part Three: Slaves at Work,” in *The Slavery Reader*, ed. Gad J. Heuman and James Walvin (New York: Routledge, 2003), 158.

go freely, own property, and run businesses, circulating in and inhabiting the public spaces of Revolutionary Williamsburg.

Colonial Williamsburg's attention to "black presence sites" is informed and shaped by Jim Crow-era conceptions of racial (im)mobility, an insidious leftover that continues to influence public and private spaces through the contemporary South. The borders that impeded movement in eighteenth-century Williamsburg were generally those of the town itself, rather than those within the town; overall, slaves and free blacks were permitted to travel within the city limits with relative freedom because people in these urban spaces knew one another.⁵⁴ Once black inhabitants traveled outside of the city, however, they were no longer permitted the same freedom, since laws forbidding manumission had, by the late eighteenth century, made it more difficult for slaveholders to free their slaves, thus making all black travelers suspect. Such immobility outside of the city limits throws into relief the rather more promiscuous spaces and relative mobility within the town. As Paige McGinley argues, racialized borders are not always those that are easily seen, but they structure black experience all the same.⁵⁵ Colonial Williamsburg, by emphasizing the distinction between white and black "presence sites," creates artificial borders that spatially belie the interpenetrating nature of "racialized" spaces in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg.

People of both races consistently inhabited public and private spaces in Williamsburg in the mid to late eighteenth century; objects were likewise used and cared for by both black and white hands. There likely were very few spaces that were strictly "black" or "white," though

⁵⁴ Mary Hardy, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 18, 2011.

⁵⁵ Paige McGinley, "'The Magic of Song!': John Lomax, Huddie Ledbetter, and the Staging of Circulation," in *Performance in the Borderlands*, ed. Ramón H. Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 129.

some spaces were certainly policed more aggressively than others. Colonial Williamsburg's attempts to isolate and emphasize "black presence sites," while a positive step towards a more inclusive history, nevertheless serves to reinforce the notion of an essential difference between the public and private spaces inhabited by blacks and whites and imposes imaginary boundaries on these performative and racialized spaces. A particularly pernicious result of such boundary-making is that visitors to today's Colonial Williamsburg must make a conscious effort to visit the featured "black presence sites" – rather than receiving a more diverse narrative of spatial integration at each site in the historical area.

An example of this spatial discrepancy is the tour "Freedom Denied: Slavery in the Time of Liberty," a walking tour offered by interpreters in the Department of African American Interpretation and Presentations (AAIP). Sam Wilson, the interpreter who conducted the tour I attended, emphasized the alternate (black) histories that could be told at several of the most popular sites in Colonial Williamsburg (fig. 2.6). At Bruton Parish Church, Wilson explained the hypocrisy at the heart of a Christian society that passed laws stipulating that baptism did not change a slave's status and that read new slave codes and runaway slave advertisements over the pulpit.⁵⁶ Wilson pointed out other elements of social and spatial intimidation used to oppress slaves, such as the public stockade, which was used to stage spectacular punishments, and the magazine, which was centrally located at least in part in order to remind slaves of the futility of insurrection. The Courthouse is likewise a particularly potent spatial symbol, since it is here that some of the most egregious slave codes were enforced while black witnesses were almost

⁵⁶ Sam Wilson, "Freedom Denied: Slavery in a Time of Liberty," tour at Colonial Williamsburg, September 16, 2011.



Figure 2.6: Sam Wilson, third-person interpreter at Colonial Williamsburg. Williamsburg, Virginia, September 18, 2011. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

entirely excluded. Wilson focused on the legal disenfranchisement of slaves while standing outside the courthouse and reminded tourists that, by 1705, slaves in the colony of Virginia were completely subjugated under the law.⁵⁷ The stories included in Wilson’s tour were not told on the more “mainstream” tours of the church, the courthouse, or the magazine. These were stories reserved only for those who sought out the ghostly, doubled histories of Colonial Williamsburg’s most celebrated spaces.

⁵⁷ A 1705 statute passed by the Virginia State Assembly declared that “All servants imported and brought into the Country...who were not Christians in their native Country...shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion...shall be held to be real estate. If any slave resist his master...correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction...the master shall be free of all punishment...as if such accident never happened.” Middleton A. Harris, *The Black Book*, 35th Anniversary ed. (New York: Random House, 2009), 87.

As with the creation and care of historical artifacts and spaces, the category of object itself is ghosted and complicated by the historical presence of the enslaved in Colonial Williamsburg. Again, regardless of level of attention a viewer grants them, historical objects can eerily return and demand to be reckoned with. This is especially true when the object in question is not an object at all, but rather a human being. As the following 1786 advertisement from the *Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* emphasizes, human cargo in the eighteenth-century English colonies was treated much the same as any other commodity bound for the market:

Gambia negroes.
 JUST arrived in the sloop *Good Intent*, Capt. Garner, from
 Africa, a few of the finest young
 SLAVES,
 ever imported into South-Carolina, to be sold, for
 cash or produce, on board the sloop at Prioleau's
 wharf.
 J. & E. Penman,
 No. 75, Bay,
Who have also for Sale,
 A few bags of COFFEE,
 and Cases of LIQUEURS.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, August 23, 1786.

The advertisement is, if not benign, then not entirely shocking—shipments of newly enslaved Africans were often advertised to drum up excitement and drive up prices—until the last few lines, where the absolute “thing-ness” of the people being sold into slavery is made plain by the jarring juxtaposition of the other commodities for sale at J. & E. Penman in Charleston.

The human being as object highlights one of the difficulties inherent in reclaiming black experience at a site like Colonial Williamsburg. If it is a general condition of the archive that it holds and explains *objects* among other things, and if it is only objects in the archive that are deemed worthy of remembrance, where does that leave the black body of the slave? Overall, the experiences of Williamsburg’s slaves were preserved neither documentarily nor archivally; part of the problem in presenting black experience at Colonial Williamsburg is this paucity of evidence of their existence and lives. Therefore, although a slave was made a “thing” by law, she was not one; a slave’s legal limbo meant that she could not enter the archive and yet also could not testify of her own existence, at least not in the forms that were so meticulously preserved.

Additionally, the transformation of person into a commodity under the law induces the continued objectification of the black body as spectacle, not only in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg, but also in contemporary Colonial Williamsburg. Because the black body today immediately signifies and stands in for the black body from the past, black interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg are always already marked as raced before they ever identify their role. Emily James, a first-person AAIP interpreter, plays Edith Cumbo, a character who is a free black woman that owns a business and remains unmarried in an attempt to maintain control over her own life and livelihood. James informed me, however, that most visitors immediately identify

her as playing a slave—and shower her with questions about life in bondage.⁵⁹ In spite of her complexly developed character that is based on an actual historical figure, James is often reflexively defined as a slave, in response to her race. There is no similar category of identification for white interpreters; visitors are far more likely to withhold assumptions about white historical characters until they receive more information. Since whiteness is normalized, visitors often assume that while white historical figures had a multiplicity of experiences, black historical figures must have had just one: that of being a slave.⁶⁰

Through this metonymic relationship—the body of the interpreter standing in for the whole of the experience of colonial slavery—AAIP interpreters become ethnographic objects, “living signs of themselves.”⁶¹ While visitors may recoil at stories of how black slaves were treated as objects during colonial times, some of those same objectifying practices continue today, marking a black interpreters as yet another object that lends an aura of authenticity to the historical site—rather than a living, breathing, embodied historical figure.

There may, however, also be a positive element to the immediate identification of the black body and the way it signifies across time and space. Certain performances may give visitors an immediate embodiment of past black experiences by mapping those experiences on the contemporary black body of an interpreter. The immediacy of the interpreter’s experience can then, perhaps, jolt visitors into an imaginative identification with figures from the past and compel those visitors to participate in what Lisa Woolfork has termed a “bodily epistemology,”

⁵⁹ Emily James, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 17, 2011.

⁶⁰ Sam Wilson verified James’s account, and mentioned that he often has to correct visitors who assume that every black person in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg would have been a slave.

⁶¹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 18.

which she defines as “a representational strategy that uses the body of a present-day protagonist to register the traumatic slave past.”⁶² Such an intervention, she claims, is “based on the premise that forcing visitors to imagine themselves into the perspective of slaves—to temporarily locate themselves in a simulated position of bondage—may offer a more proximate and more complex interpretation of the slave past.”⁶³ Woolfork’s hope is that, by emplacing the historical experience of slavery in contemporary and instantly identifiable bodies, a greater degree of empathetic connection can be engendered. While this connection is certainly possible at a site like Colonial Williamsburg, it is not generally supported by the programming offered, which often fails to engage visitors in characters other than those whose historical fame precedes them.

One of the most popular vignettes performed as part of *Revolutionary City*, “A Declaration of Independence!,” highlights the hypocrisy that underlines fervent patriotic worship of the Founding Fathers and their contributions to human freedom. The vignette uses a prop as material culture, offering a “special presentation [that] gives voice to ‘the People’s’ document.”⁶⁴ The prop is the Declaration of Independence, a copy of which was read aloud at three locations in Williamsburg on July 25, 1776. The juxtaposition of two documents—the Declaration of Independence, with its claim that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” and the above-mentioned advertisement of a slave sale—emphasizes the belief, supported by the slave codes of eighteenth-century Virginia, that slaves were not men (or

⁶² Lisa Woolfork, *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2009), 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁴ “Colonial Williamsburg: This Week [September 12-18, 2011] Map and Program Guide” (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2011).

humans) at all. Instead they were classified as objects, things, and commodities. Here then, is another haunted object that is transformed, rather ominously, into a thing: the Declaration of Independence becomes simultaneously a plea for freedom and a consignment of a certain segment of humanity to “thinghood.”

Predictably, interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg do not often talk about the commoditization of humankind that slavery engendered in the eighteenth-century English colonies. In her article “Performing History as Memorialization: Thinking with ... *And Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi* and Brown University’s Slavery and Justice Committee,” Patricia Ybarra identifies the extreme trouble at the heart of researching or even acknowledging slavery, a problematic that is exacerbated by trying to represent it in tandem with the establishment of the nation’s founding principles. The primary difficulty of understanding and performing slavery, she argues, is that

It requires us to encounter the very fact of humans not being recognized as such by the laws of our own country. This disgusting absurdity...is astonishing and horrifying and recalls an affective, rather than a reasoned logical response. There is simply no logic that can rectify this injustice for most contemporary audiences.⁶⁵

Ybarra here gestures to legal slave codes and their function of enshrining human beings as things in US law. This absurdity reaches its fullest measure in the Three-Fifths Clause of the

⁶⁵ Patricia Ybarra, “Performing History as Memorialization: Thinking with ... *And Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi* and Brown University’s Slavery and Justice Committee,” in *Enacting History*, ed. Scott Magelssen and Rhona Justice-Malloy (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 120.

Constitution, which defined slaves as three-fifths of a person in matters of population counts for apportioning representatives.

The Three-Fifths Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Clause function as historical counterweights to the tendency for purely celebratory reverence toward the founding of the United States of America. When placed alongside the often jubilant tones taken toward the documents and ideas that underpin the ideology of US exceptionalism, the discord introduced by slavery becomes even more acute: “Confronting this disjuncture between legality and justice as absurdity is one of the more difficult aspects of dealing with the legacy of slavery in the United States, whose legal code and constitution are held up as a sign of enlightened thought and human progress.”⁶⁶ Or, as English abolitionist Thomas Day put it more bluntly: “If there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot, signing resolutions of independency with the one hand, and with the other brandishing a whip over his frightened slaves.”⁶⁷ Both materially and psychically, it is easier to talk about silverware as representative of a certain class of white gentry who penned beautifully persuasive words about liberty and equality than to look squarely at the material (and ghostly) remains of their other property—the owned human beings that made early US economic and ideological independence possible.

The ghostly materializations of past lives, experiences, and spaces found throughout Colonial Williamsburg represent a return of the repressed of history—“an articulate subsoil” that exists alongside the sanctioned, surface stories and spaces of the tourist site. These shards of

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Thomas Day (1776), quoted in James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, “Introduction,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), x.

history never fully disappear, Michel de Certeau reminds us, and they inevitably return sometime in the future:

But whatever this new understanding of the past holds to be irrelevant—shards created by the selection of materials, remainders left aside by an explication—comes back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and crannies: “resistances,” “survivals,” or delays discreetly perturb the pretty order of a line of “progress” or a system of interpretation. These are lapses in the syntax constructed by the law of a place. Therein they symbolize a return of the repressed, that is, a return of what, at a given moment, has *become* unthinkable in order for a new identity to *become* thinkable.⁶⁸

For much of Colonial Williamsburg’s history, slavery was seen as incompatible with—unthinkable next to—the celebration of the new US identity that emerged with the Revolution and the writing of the Constitution. The materialization of black experiences (both enslaved and free) at the site represents a return of what was once made unthinkable, occluded, and ignored.

Racialized Geographies of Memory and Oppression

Upon arriving at Colonial Williamsburg, visitors first report to the visitor’s center to obtain tickets, which are then attached to their clothing by adhesive or, if the tourist is staying for more than one day, a little metal clip.⁶⁹ While in the visitor’s center, they are encouraged to

⁶⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4.

⁶⁹ Visitors can wander around the Historic Area without paying for admission, but entrance to any of Colonial Williamsburg’s preserved or restored spaces or attendance at *Revolutionary City* performances requires a ticket.

meticulously plan out their day(s) with help from a docent and to watch “Williamsburg: the Story of a Patriot,” Colonial Williamsburg’s “signature film,” which has been showing continuously in the center since 1957.⁷⁰ Once tourists have oriented themselves spatially, historically, and thematically within the center, they are ready to proceed to the historic area, a trip that can be completed either on foot or by shuttle. Guests who travel to the area on foot walk on a bucolic, wooded path that borders a stream and winds past the Great Hopes Plantation, the nexus of Colonial Williamsburg’s African American programming. Those who take the shuttle, however, could feasibly spend an entire week in Colonial Williamsburg without ever encountering Great Hopes.

Colonial Williamsburg’s Historic Area covers approximately three square miles, the heart of which is Duke of Gloucester Street, a thoroughfare that is densely occupied with historical places and closed to traffic during the park’s daytime operating hours. Some historical locations, such as the Governor’s Palace, fan out from this main artery, but the majority of Colonial Williamsburg’s offerings are found along the street (fig. 2.7). Duke of Gloucester Street also serves as the primary stage for performances of *Revolutionary City*, Colonial Williamsburg’s “street theatre program” that is meant to “inspire [visitors] to play [their] part in this ongoing experiment in republican governance.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ “Williamsburg: the Story of a Patriot’ Restored,” Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed December 12, 2011, http://www.history.org/foundation/general/patriot_restored.cfm. Happily, as Anders Greenspan points out, some of the more racist scenes in the original film have been expunged. Greenspan, 137.

⁷¹ *Revolutionary City Guidebook*, 3.

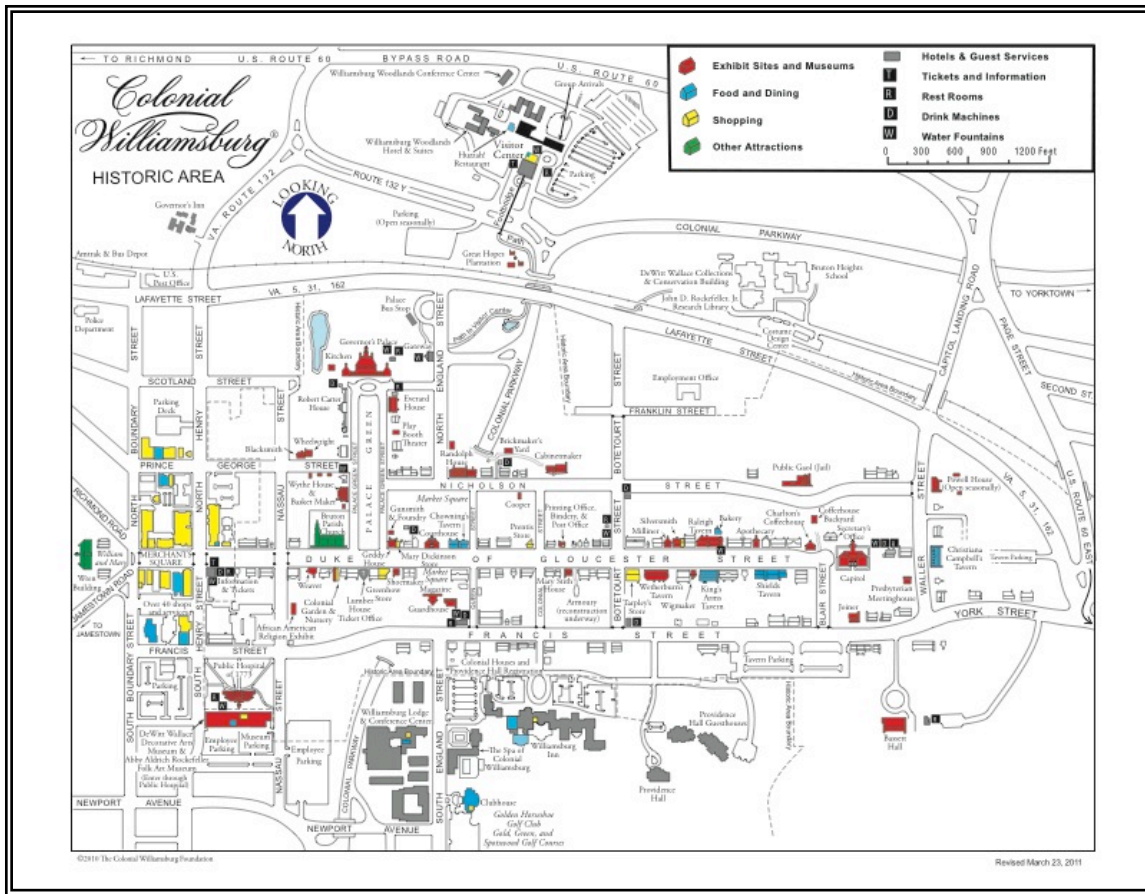


Figure 2.7: Official visitor’s map of Colonial Williamsburg’s Historic Area. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Revolutionary City performances, short vignette-type scenes with titles like “The Gale from the North!,” “A Declaration of Independence!,” and “For Love of My Country,” are played by costumed and microphoned interpreters who reenact both well-known and obscure figures from the colonial period; generally, these figures participate in some sort of public discussion about the right to revolt and the consequences of declaring independence. These vignettes, like the historical houses, are clustered around Duke of Gloucester Street. The daily vignettes are based on a single theme so that visitors who attend each of the scenes might get a somewhat

fuller picture of one of the many complex arguments that were swirling around, for instance, the collapse of the English government.

Some of the most popular performances offered in the *Revolutionary City* repertoire are the “A Public Audience With...” and “A Conversation With” vignettes, performances that include a discourse followed by a question and answer session with famous founding fathers (and mothers—Martha Washington occasionally conducts a public conversation) and are performed daily (fig. 2.8). These performances are an answer to the ever-present public demand for interaction with the historical figures that are seen as the primary movers of the events that



Figure 2.8: “A Public Audience with George Washington.” Williamsburg, Virginia, September 15, 2011. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

shaped Williamsburg and the early United States. There is a public audience of about forty-five minutes every morning, followed by a period where the interpreters meet with individuals to answer additional questions and take photos. Each of these performances is given in a central location (either on or very near to Duke of Gloucester Street), and they are spread throughout the day, in recognition of the fact that many visitors will want to attend more than one in a single visit.

Throughout the day, there are also several other *Revolutionary City* scenes staged within the Historic Area, culminating in a longer, more coherent afternoon program that integrates several of the historical figures that visitors have seen in other vignettes during the day, all coming together to provide their voice to a focused debate on one particular aspect of the fight for independence. The afternoon program often draws the biggest crowds; it also offers the largest multiplicity of perspectives. Wider political debates are lead by well-known figures, while lesser-known characters add a more diverse and intimate flavor to the discussions, refracting large political questions through the prism of individual experience. Against a backdrop of revolutionary fervor, lovers quarrel, households disagree about which path to pursue, and slaves and free blacks discuss the options available to them in this time of social upheaval. All of this happens in the open air on the eastern end of Duke of Gloucester Street.

The stories that are featured in *Revolutionary City* have been chosen for their potential to encourage spectators to consider their own roles as citizens. Though similar to earlier “character interpretations,” the scenes in *Revolutionary City* are more explicitly theatrical, a goal that is patently recognized by the term “actor interpreters,” the new title given to interpreters that

perform the *Revolutionary City* vignettes.⁷² Positioning interpreters as “actors” and presentations as “scenes” emphasizes the already inherent theatricality of the space of the Historic Area, emplacing visitors not just as tourists, but as spectators of and participants in history. Reading the *Revolutionary City* performances through Féral’s concept of theatricality as a spatial relation that permits “both the performing subject as well as the spectator to pass from ‘here’ to ‘elsewhere,’” it becomes clear that this programming is not new but rather a continuation of the same theatrical thinking that infuses the rest of the site.⁷³ The positioning of these particular performances as more theatrical is less an indication of some ontological difference between this and other programming offered at Colonial Williamsburg than of an inherent anti-theatrical bias that shapes the site’s vision of itself as a museum, not a performance space.

While the experiences of black historical figures and unknown slaves are woven into the narratives of revolution and rebellion that form the core of the *Revolutionary City* programming, by and large the programming that takes place in the central locations of the Historic Area—on Duke of Gloucester Street, in the Coffeehouse backyard, outside the Raleigh Tavern, and at the Kimball Theatre—revolves around the “big names” of the Revolution. By contrast, much of the African American programming occurs in a “non-place” as a walking tour or on the outskirts of the Historic Area, up near the visitor’s center at Great Hopes Plantation. The spatial employment of these narratives is at once historically accurate and revelatory of the metaphorical location of black histories at Colonial Williamsburg.

⁷² Ibid., 88.

⁷³ Féral, 98.

The contemporary walking tours presented by the Department of African American Interpretive Programs (AAIP) emerged from an earlier iteration of black interpretation, the “Other Half” Tour that began in 1980 and was given until at least 2007.⁷⁴ In Colonial Williamsburg parlance, “The Other Half” refers to the colonial village’s black inhabitants; historians and curators saw the term as a linguistic play on the demographic fact that since half of Williamsburg’s population in the eighteenth century was of African descent. Anna Logan Lawson points out etymological problems with this term, however; particularly that it quite literally “others” the black interpreters and the history that they present, reinscribing an unequal and even racist positioning of that history.⁷⁵ During the “Other Half” Tour, guests walked the city rather than staying in a single space—the tour was one about people, not necessarily places—and entered through back doors to simulate the way that slaves would actually have negotiated the spaces in the colonial town. Not allowed to enter through the front door, Williamsburg’s slaves would have been intimately familiar with other modes of entry. This move was an attempt to spatially locate slave experiences and phenomenologically reproduce the feeling of being a third-class citizen in colonial society. It was an affective choice to make space perform historical experience for visitors.

Contemporary tours no longer emphasize the “backdoor” sensations of being a slave; instead, they offer tourists other ways to affectively imagine their way into black experiences. “Her Enduring Spirit,” a *Revolutionary City* walking tour given by “free African Virginian”

⁷⁴ Handler and Gable, Magelssen, and Anna Logan Lawson all write about the “Other Half” Tour, but it has not been offered during the years (2009-2011) that I have been studying and writing about Colonial Williamsburg.

⁷⁵ Anna Logan Lawson, ““The Other Half”: Making African-American History at Colonial Williamsburg” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1995), 11-15, ProQuest (AAT 9525120).



Figure 2.9: Interpreter Emily James as Edith Cumbo. Williamsburg, Virginia, June 25, 2010.
Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

Edith Cumbo, uses the rhetoric of class solidarity to forge connecting bonds between the largely white, middle class visitors and the past black inhabitants of the town (fig. 2.9). Emily James, the first-person interpreter who portrays Cumbo, oscillates between in-character observations of her life in eighteenth-century Virginia and metatheatrical commentary on contemporary issues, continually emphasizing the distinction between the founding figures, whom she calls “fancy britches” and everyone else: the ninety-eight percent of Williamsburg’s inhabitants that were neither wealthy nor educated enough to be included in official discussions of revolt. The placement of this tour outside of the celebrated buildings helped James focus spectator attention on class division rather than just racial difference; because we were all “poor folk” like her, she

assured us, we would not have been invited into any of the spaces that had been chosen for restoration, other than public buildings such as taverns or churches.⁷⁶

Although it appeals across racial lines because of James's focus on socioeconomic status, the tour is still largely about race and what it may have meant to be a free black woman in slaveholding Virginia. Walking tours such as this can bolster an idea of black culture as unrooted, migratory, and as having "no place" and thus being excluded from this deeply rooted space of national celebration. The separation between visitors who belong in the space (or who can imaginatively thrust themselves into this past space) and those who are seemingly without place can serve to reinforce racial divisions that have characterized and shaped US culture from the country's founding. One effect of this division is the invisibility of white privilege and the way it structures tourist encounters. Tourism in the United States operates from a position of the visitor's presumed whiteness; the tourist is positioned as "white," even if he or she identifies differently. Interpreters like James proceed from this assumption as well and search for affective strategies to bridge the differences not just between past and present, but also between black and white.

Although several African American history-themed tours and *Revolutionary City* vignettes are staged in the theatrical space of Duke of Gloucester Street in the center of the Historic Area, Great Hopes Plantation is essentially the heart of African American interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg. Spatially and metaphorically separated from the rest of the Historic Area, Great Hopes is a representation of a "middling" plantation, one in which the white owners

⁷⁶ "Her Enduring Spirit," *Revolutionary City*, Williamsburg, VA, September 17, 2011.

worked alongside the few slaves they owned to farm the land and run the household.⁷⁷ While, in reality, most of the tradesmen and workers on Duke of Gloucester Street would have been black (the majority enslaved, a handful free), in practice at contemporary Colonial Williamsburg almost all of the skilled workers that interpret crafts in the shops along that main thoroughfare are white. Generally, black interpreters play a few select figures in the *Revolutionary City* scenes and represent enslaved peoples at Great Hopes Plantation and inside the Peyton Randolph House (fig. 2.10).

The spatial positioning of Colonial Williamsburg's African American programming is revealing: in terms of locating history, black experiences are both literally and figuratively emplaced on the margins. This racialized geography of exclusion works to reinforce and embody the ancillary position of black history at Colonial Williamsburg, which itself echoes the subordination of black bodies through slavery. Black experiences, black histories, and the black bodies of interpreters and visitors are continually shifted out, away from the center, deemphasized and marginalized. If places such as Colonial Williamsburg are consecrated as the spatial embodiment of a national past and a national character, perhaps nothing is as revealing as the fact that black performances continue to be relegated to secondary status, both spatially and thematically.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Michael Olmert, Suzanne E. Coffman, and Paul Aron, *Official Guide to Colonial Williamsburg*, 3rd ed. (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2007), 116. "Middling" is a term used to describe the most common type of plantation or farm in Virginia during colonial times. The owner of such a farm would have possessed fewer than ten slaves and would have worked in the field alongside those slaves. Ed Crews, "Work, Work, and More Work: Middling Planters Took Hard Road to Wealth, Respectability in Colonial Virginia," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Spring 2005, accessed January 21, 2012, <http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Spring05/agriculture.cfm>.

⁷⁸ From 1969 to 2007, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation owned and operated Carter's Grove, a large-scale plantation located seven miles outside of Colonial Williamsburg. The CWF restored some of the slave quarters, the foundations of which had been discovered in the 1970s, and made Carter's Grove the primary location for their interpretation of rural slave life. After Carter's Grove was damaged by Hurricane Isabel in 2003, the CWF suspended visitation and later, in 2007, sold the plantation in a protected sale. All programming that represented rural slave life was then moved to Great Hopes.

Beyond the metaphorical meaning, the spatial separation of black experiences serves to further minimize black histories by making it more difficult to accidentally encounter upon these spaces—tourists have to plan to go to Great Hopes, often missing other programming in order to travel to the plantation.



Figure 2.10: An interpreter explains describes the work done in a tobacco field in “Workin’ the Soil, Healin’ the Soul,” at Great Hopes Plantation. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

The addition of African American and “middling” history to Colonial Williamsburg’s programming in the 1970s and 1980s was an attempt to recover some of the voices that had been absented from earlier presentations of Williamsburg’s history, to embody and emplace these missing stories through interpretive programming. However, balancing the idea of Colonial

Williamsburg as the cradle of the revolution and thus a site to be celebrated with the idea of it as materially and socially reliant upon chattel slavery and thus a site of shame is a difficult proposition. Although the social history introduced in the 1970s emphasized the inclusion of diverse stories and experiences, the museum's reliance on specific types of documentary evidence has nevertheless impeded the full implementation of the complex history of black experience in Williamsburg.

Interpreters are trained to tell “just the facts”—narratives about place that are verifiable through the documentary or material archives available.⁷⁹ However, this emphasis on documentary evidence serves to blur the lines between performative reproduction and historical accuracy, encouraging an “institutional culture” wherein visitors are encouraged to view a reenactment “as a fact, not an interpretive re-creation of eighteenth-century realities.” The circular logic continues: “And to ‘interpret’...[eighteenth-century] work [is] simply to tell the public about facts that [are] there for all to see.”⁸⁰ So, although these reenactments enact an unraveling of archival “truth” through performance, they continue, for many tourists, to reinscribe certain pasts and ideologies as truth through what Richard Handler and Eric Gable call a “rhetoric of interpretation” that “serves to reinforce an objectivism that remains dominant” within the CWF.⁸¹

This “just the facts” mode of operation can shroud insidious prejudice in a veneer of historical accuracy and fidelity. In my personal conversations with AAIP interpreters, the subject of documentation as historical and spatial disenfranchisement came up repeatedly. Often, in

⁷⁹ Sam Wilson, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 17, 2011.

⁸⁰ Handler and Gable, 83.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

narratives told in the main houses, stores, and churches in the historical area, the experiences of the black inhabitants of eighteenth-century Williamsburg are either ignored altogether or else offered with a disclaimer that these stories cannot be verified. The choice to avoid telling a more complete history is often a result of the discomfort that accompanies such discussions, and Handler and Gable point out that white interpreters “were able to justify their discomfort, while avoiding the taint of explicit racism, because they often believed that black history was, as they often complained, ‘undocumented’—it verged on fiction; it never quite had the same just-the-facts authenticity as the stories they could tell about the elite white inhabitants of the town.”⁸² This convenient cover allows for the suppression of the site’s “unofficial history” by permitting stories about undocumented or under-documented experiences to continue to be elided within the narratives offered at the primary sites of touristic experience.⁸³

Questioning why black experiences and histories are un- or under-documented invites further challenges to the historiographical practices that define and codify spaces of national memory. As Michel de Certeau argues, history is inextricably caught up in the both the political power and the space in which (or through which) it is produced: “‘the making of history’ is buttressed by a political power which creates a space proper (a walled city, a nation, etc.) where a will can and must write (construct) a system (a reason articulating practices).”⁸⁴ Revolutionary-era historians, influenced by political and social structures that were funded and ideologically shaped by chattel slavery, often did not include black experiences and histories in their writings.

⁸² Ibid., 84.

⁸³ For more details about the use of documentation as disenfranchisement in the production of African American history at Colonial Williamsburg, see Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, 79-84, 91-2; and Lawson, 123-69.

⁸⁴ Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 6.

The following decades, which brought an entrenchment of the domestic slave trade and, later, Jim Crow-era prohibitions meant to further disenfranchise black citizens, likewise produced historical records that obscured or manipulated stories of black experience. Thus, the burden of representing historical black experience is shifted to other modes of knowledge production, such as close readings of material culture and a greater focus on oral and performance traditions.

Although there is much to be said for verifying the factual information that is offered at living history museums (indeed, the argument has been made that there is plenty of evidence for the lives of free blacks and slaves in Colonial Williamsburg, and that previous programs and performances that obscured that fact were whitewashing or purposefully misreading the documentary history), the avoidance of any but the most official version of historical events often seems to be simply an excuse for interpreters to avoid confronting unpleasant topics with visitors. Although such an assertion may be ungenerous to the interpreters, who may just be following the recommendations and mandates of the CWF's corporate policies, a pervasive attitude of black history as suspect can be seen in individual interpreters' choices as well.⁸⁵ In several of the primary spaces of historical memory, such as the Governor's Palace, the Capitol, and Bruton Parish Church, interpreters consistently referred to "servants" who would have also lived and worked in these spaces. Always, the servants were explained in reference to the work they did for the inhabitants of the space, who were doing the *real* work of provoking revolution.

While certainly there were white servants as well as free black men and women who worked in these households, the majority of domestic workers during the Revolutionary time period represented by these spaces were slaves. The linguistic choice to refer to "servants" rather

⁸⁵ Lawson, 17-20.

than to “slaves” has a clear impact on public understanding of the economic and social benefits that slavery provided members of the gentry. Curious as to the reason why such terminology was being used, particularly since the museum’s official line is that they are trying to get *more* African American history into the spaces, not less, I approached an AAIP interpreter with the question. She explained that interpreters are encouraged to make their own linguistic choices during historical house tours, and that many white interpreters are simply more comfortable talking about servants than they are talking about slaves.⁸⁶ Such a choice underscores the fact that, although a reference to the lack of documentary evidence provides a useful cover, often it is the comfort of both interpreters and visitors that takes precedence over historical fact.⁸⁷

This attention to comfort is especially obvious when it comes to decisions about how to confront narratives of interracial relationships.⁸⁸ Such narratives are an inherent part of colonial history, through perhaps evidenced less by documentation than by the bodies that are a result of such unions. The topic is rarely broached within the great houses; if it is mentioned, it is in an oblique way that undermines the veracity of stories of such relationships by figures such as Thomas Jefferson and George Wythe. As with other elisions of black history and experience, the given reason for this exclusion the paucity of documentation to back up the stories.

Although these stories are generally avoided on tours inside the houses, they are often told as (albeit undocumented) fact during the walking tours and lectures given by AAIP interpreters. The narrative of George Wythe and his slave Lydia Broadnax, with whom he is

⁸⁶ Hope Evans, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 18, 2011.

⁸⁷ For a closer view of the economic and visitor-driven factors that led to a retrenchment of a more traditional “patriot’s” view of Colonial Williamsburg after the initial push toward a more inclusive social history, see Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, 80-84, 90-91.

⁸⁸ Handler and Gable, 86-89.

rumored to have had a child, is often used as a way to open up the conversation about the asymmetrical sexual power relationships between masters and slaves and the legal and social codes that allowed for the prevalence of these relationships in the colonies. While many of the AAIP interpreters understand “lack of documentation” as a euphemism for avoiding the discussion of complicated issues of race and power, white interpreters alternately often believe that the AAIP interpreters “play fast and loose with the facts in order to tell stories motivated by personal and political agendas.”⁸⁹ Although interpreters acknowledge that many of the claims they are making, especially about sexual relationships between slaves and slaveholders, are often unsupported by documentary evidence, they continue to tell such stories as a way to get to the deeper truth of racially motivated differences, particularly legal differences, in the colonial capital of Williamsburg—a story that is beyond “just the facts.”⁹⁰

Rumors about Wythe and his relationship with Broadnax have clung to his legacy since she moved to Richmond and remained living with him after he had granted her freedom. Although there is no clear documentary evidence that he had an intimate relationship with her, many, including biographer Fawn Brodie, have drawn that connection between Wythe with Broadnax and suggested that Michael Brown, a young male slave to whom Wythe dedicated many resources and whose education he entrusted to Thomas Jefferson, may have been their son.⁹¹ During tours inside the Wythe house in Colonial Williamsburg, any aspersions that are cast

⁸⁹ Handler and Gable, 87.

⁹⁰ Wilson, interview.

⁹¹ Fawn McKay Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974), 389-91. Brodie elaborates on the contents of Wythe’s will, which left most of his possessions and property to Broadnax, her son, Michael Brown, and another slave named Ben; the will also requested that Thomas Jefferson assume responsibility for Brown’s education. The contents of the will became excruciatingly public following the fatal poisoning of Wythe and Brown (Broadnax was also poisoned, but lived). George Sweney, Wythe’s nephew,

on the owner's extramarital liaisons or Michael Brown's paternity are swiftly batted aside with a rejoinder that "it is not in the documents." This response hierarchizes certain kinds of produced knowledge over others—in particular, documentary knowledge over gossip knowledge. There may, however, be value in this story, even if it is false: it is possible that the gossip knowledge this story relays ties into a larger narrative of legal, social, and physical inequality in a time celebrated for its aspirations to liberty and equality.

Clare Birchall argues for the transformative potential of gossip knowledge, suggesting that "the constitutive relationship between knowledge and gossip [could] upset, halt, arrest, challenge the economy and patterns of ownership and power."⁹² Several AAIP interpreters subscribe to the view that less- or differently-documented sources of knowledge—such as those handed down through oral tradition and gossip chains—possess the libratory potential to "challenge...patterns of ownership and power" within the structures of embodied historiography of the kind performed at Colonial Williamsburg. By reclaiming a discursive, theatrical space in which the stories of the past (documented or not) can be relayed as revealing a truth about the fundamental social relations present in a place like Colonial Williamsburg, AAIP interpreters create a challenge to the dominant practices of historiography that underpin most contemporary

was charged with the murders. Brodie describes the will's revelations: "Sweeney's trial was the sensation of Richmond. For a white man to leave a house and grounds to his mulatto housekeeper, and bank stock to her yellow son, and to ask none other than the President of the United States to be responsible for the boy's education seemed such an obvious advertisement of the boy's paternity that it left many of the citizens of Richmond aghast." Sweeney was acquitted of Wythe's murder because Broadnax was not allowed to testify against a white man; the indictment against him for Michael Brown's murder was vacated before it went to trial. "Thus," Brodie continues, "the whole legal paraphernalia of Virginia law was perverted to absolve the...murderer and to dramatize the legal sanction of the murder of a man who would so advertise miscegenation," 391.

⁹² Clare Birchall, *Knowledge Goes Pop: From Conspiracy Theory to Gossip* (New York: Berg, 2006), 125.

museum performance. Whatever they may get wrong, these irruptive discursive practices also get quite a lot right.

Exploring the hybridity of memory and the potentiality of mistakes, Tavia Nyong'o addresses the potential for redress that lies within misrememberings. "I am preoccupied," he writes, "not with the virtues of getting it right but with the ethical chance that may lie within getting it wrong. What does it mean to mistake a memory, to remember by mistake, or even to remember a mistake?"⁹³ What might this "ethical chance" be that "lie[s] within getting it wrong"? In Colonial Williamsburg, it might be the opportunity to push visitors into reconsidering their patriotic devotion to a particular narrative of the founding of the United States of America. Even though many have tried, historians have been unable to absolutely prove Wythe's relationship with Broadnax, and even if they had, interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg argue that it wouldn't matter because Michael Brown wasn't even born in Williamsburg. On the other side, AAIP interpreters argue that even if Michael Brown *wasn't* Wythe's son, it doesn't change the fact that the story reveals a deeper truth about the complicated, unbalanced relationships between slaves and slaveholders and the ways in which even the most respected citizens of Williamsburg—including Wythe—were complicit in the sustaining of these dynamics.

Misrememberings, then, can evoke the ghostly past, become an irruption that reveals that which has been hidden. Handler and Gable, in a particularly revealing passage, detail an interview with a white interpreter at the Wythe house who refuses to talk about Broadnax as anyone more than a household slave—one of George Wythe's possessions. When they asked her

⁹³ Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 136.

why she would not field visitors' questions about the possible relationship, she said, "I don't talk about that, and I don't interpret any ghosts. I do nothing with ghosts.... They ask you, 'Do you know about the ghost that's supposed to be in this house?' And I say, 'No, if it's not documented, I don't do things that aren't documented.' 'Oh.' So they go off to somebody else to see if they'll tell them."⁹⁴ Although this interpreter is placing the absented story of Wythe and Broadnax's connection on par with ghost stories in a juxtaposition of equally unusable and unprovable narratives, this comparison can be instructive in a positive way as well. "The ghost," Avery Gordon reminds us, "is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course."⁹⁵ The ghost, in the form of history long buried and purposefully lost, can still, in its own way, trouble the present and the future of these sites, threatening not only the stories now told there, but also those that will continue to be told. Misrememberings and interracial dynamics, as Nyong'o suggests, ghost the present, demanding to be heard and reckoned with on their own terms. This recurrence is, for some people (such as the interpreter at the Wythe house) all the more frightening because the ghost represents the past and the future in one figure, and "one can never distinguish between the future-to-come and the coming-back of a specter."⁹⁶

These ghostly absences reveal something greater than narrative truth when they emerge: a kind of social truth that is otherwise obscured because it is undocumented. Beyond tales of mixed race children, there are other absences that may not amount to outright censorship of a

⁹⁴ Handler and Gable, 86.

⁹⁵ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

⁹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 46.

black presence, but that nevertheless shade visitors' perceptions of the founding fathers' role in the promotion and maintenance of slavery. Sam Wilson, a third-person (non-character) AAIP interpreter, repeatedly mentioned that almost all, if not all, of the famous men who lived in Williamsburg would have had a manservant with them at all times in public (and even most times in private).⁹⁷ These manservants and, for women, maids knew more about their masters and mistresses than most of their owners' white friends; Thomas Jefferson even referred to his manservant Jupiter, who was nearly his same age, as his "best friend."⁹⁸ Wilson reaffirmed this claim, and explained that if Colonial Williamsburg's interpretation of Thomas Jefferson were to exhibit absolute fidelity to the documentary record, a black interpreter playing Jupiter would be at every appearance made by the white interpreter playing Jefferson (enslaved manservants would also be at all appearances made by George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Peyton Randolph).

Trusting differently-documented sources of history, even in the face of possibly "getting it wrong," offers tourists possible tactics for resisting the often oppressive strategies of documentary evidence used to support programming at historical tourist sites. Likewise, differently inhabiting spaces of celebration can push back against some of the institutional strategies of "accuracy" in order to create affective performances that endow the tourist and the black presenter with the agency to challenge accepted narratives of national memory. By utilizing these tactics, the people who circulate through spaces of memory alter the production of these places.

⁹⁷ "Freedom Denied: Slavery in a Time of Liberty." Colonial Williamsburg Tour. Williamsburg, VA, September 16, 2011.

⁹⁸ Aaron Wolfe, interview with Harmony Hunter, "Harsh World, This World," *Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site*, podcast audio, November 28, 2011, <http://podcasts.history.org/112811/HarshWorldThisWorld.mp3>.

Performing Colonial Blackness

In 2004, Colonial Williamsburg's education department decided to expand their interpreter program to more fully embrace the theatrical thinking that already suffused the site by creating a focused "street theatre experience" that would encourage visitors to further engage with the questions of liberty and revolution that consumed the town in the late eighteenth century.⁹⁹ *Revolutionary City* was crafted as an interactive role-playing experience that would envelop spectators in the conversations and dilemmas that shaped the founding of the United States. As the *Revolutionary City* guidebook explains, "All the scenes and stories invite audience members to vicariously cast themselves into the roles of members of the Williamsburg community during the American Revolution. While guests are not literally assigned roles, they are referred to by the characters in scripted scenes of in informal interactions as if they are part of the community."¹⁰⁰ Although the attempt to create more engaged citizens through role-play is undoubtedly a worthwhile one, the CWF's aesthetic choices sometimes work to undermine the emancipatory potential of this engagement. One of the clearest examples of this undermining can be seen in the 1994 Publick Times Estate Auction, which featured a reenactment of a slave auction as part of the performance. The auction provoked intense response from and protests by several groups, including the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who were afraid that the auction would amount to little more than a continuation of a tradition of

⁹⁹ *Revolutionary City*, 85.

¹⁰⁰ *Revolutionary City*, 88.

compulsory performances that offered black pain, sorrow, and suffering as entertainment for white audiences.¹⁰¹

Christy Coleman Matthews, who was then head of the AAIP and played Mary, one of the slaves for sale in the auction, said that she and other members of the cast were surprised at their and others' emotional responses to the performance. While protesters demanded "Say No to Racist Shows," the interpreters themselves were overcome by the difficulty of realistically embodying a character who is bound to silence by the performance paradigm of the slave auction. Matthews explained the affective difficulty inherent in privileging a "realistic" performance rather than a mediated presentation of a historical event. Performers in the reenactment struggled, Matthews says, because they "couldn't wear their interpreter hat [during the auction]. They were used to relying on both theatrical tricks for suspension of disbelief and the story told as an interpreter. . . . They had to dig into their personal psyche. That was a new experience for these people."¹⁰² The psychological strain is, according to Matthews, why the auction has never been repeated. "The staff didn't want to do it...because it was too emotionally draining."¹⁰³ The forced aphasia required by a realistic performance paradigm made the performers vulnerable rather than empowering them as witnesses or historical authorities.

¹⁰¹ See Detine Bowers, "Slave Auction at Williamsburg," *Richmond Afro-American and the Richmond Planet*, November 2, 1995, A5; Boyd Bentley, "CW Auctions Slaves: Re-enactment Provokes Emotional Debate," *Newport News Daily Press*, October 11, 1994; Patrick Lackey, "'Our History Must be Told': The Re-enactment of a Slave Auction at Colonial Williamsburg Sparked Emotions and Debate," *Norfolk Virginian Pilot and Ledger-Star*, October 11, 1994, B1; Mary-Christine Phillip, "To Reenact or Not to Reenact? For Some, Williamsburg Slave Auction Shows Discomfort of a Humiliating Past," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 11.18 (November 3, 1994): 24; and Clarence Waldron, "Staged Slave Auction Sparks Debate on Slavery and Racism," *Jet*, November 1994, 12-15.

¹⁰² Christy Coleman Matthews, qtd. in Scott Magelssen, "Making History in the Second Person: Post-touristic Consideration for Living Historical Interpretation," *Theatre Journal* 58.2 (May 2006): 296.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

In articles that explore the creation and aftermath of the Publick Times Estate Auction, both Scott Magelssen and Bruce McConachie assert that realism and realistic acting techniques offered the wrong performance method to tell this story.¹⁰⁴ While Magelssen argues for shifting more historiographic agency onto the visitor through second-person interpretation (a mode of performance where museum patrons themselves take on characters), McConachie suggests a more dialectical, non-realistic form of acting as a path to greater engagement and empowerment for both performers and spectators. McConachie asks, “is the rhetoric of stage realism, the performance analog of authenticity for museum representations, the best way to engage and educate as audience of tourists about the realities of slavery?”¹⁰⁵ The performance mode of stage realism, he continues, often functions not to involve and educate the audience, but rather to “objectify performers” and “disempower...spectators, turning them into emotionally engaged but passive observers.”¹⁰⁶

AAIP interpreters likewise identify the unsuitableness of realistic performance for presenting black experiences, particularly because of the potential for realism to encourage politically detached audience members. In a September 2011 conversation, Hope Evans, a third-person AAIP interpreter, explained that, in wake of the success of *Revolutionary City*, the CWF was encouraging more and more programming featuring realistic modes of performance.¹⁰⁷ AAIP interpreters have pushed back against this move; Evans emphasized the importance of a dialectical component to the African American programming, arguing that the give-and-take

¹⁰⁴ Magelssen, “Making History in the Second Person”; Bruce McConachie, “Slavery and Authenticity: Performing a Slave Auction at Colonial Williamsburg,” *Theatre Annual* 51 (1998).

¹⁰⁵ McConachie, 71.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Evans, interview.

between audience and performer is necessary in order to simultaneously empower the interpreters and politically engage visitors in this vital part of the US past. The dialectical component of the programming uses a theatrical strategy—the revelation of the actor behind the mask—as a form of emancipatory performance, allowing interpreters to use their performances not to uncritically “re-create” the past, but rather to create distance between themselves and the past and to emphasize the breaks within history alongside the continuities.

Such tactics of distancing, which can emphasize the constructed nature of the history told at sites like Colonial Williamsburg, can also deconstruct spectators’ expectations of authenticity and encourage them to engage with the processes that construct history. Once the expectation of authenticity or realistic modes of performance is broken down, room is made for the affective possibility that living history performances can function as enactments of witnessing that take place in a distinct space marked by the events that have transpired there. Though many interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg speak of themselves in terms reminiscent of historians, docents, or even teachers, others clearly establish their role as witness, testifying of the hole in the great whole of history being presented at the site.¹⁰⁸ Most often, those who offer themselves as “witnesses” are the African American interpreters who insert histories of black life in early Virginia into the more common triumphalist narratives of the Founding Fathers.

The concept of a witness who speaks on behalf of the disappeared is an inherently troubled one. As Giorgio Agamben, writing about first-person narratives of the Holocaust, argues, “the ‘true’ witnesses, the ‘complete witnesses,’ are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are those who ‘touched bottom’... The survivors speak in their

¹⁰⁸ Sam Wilson was very helpful in helping me sort out some of the possible roles that interpreters take on. Wilson, interview.

stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to the missing testimony.”¹⁰⁹ According to Agamben, then, even first-hand witnesses of trauma and tragedy cannot testify of what happened; they can only serve as a reminder of what is missing. As Harvey Young, working through Agamben, explains, “the notion that spectacular deaths can produce accurate ‘witnessed’ testimonies proves fallacious on two accounts: first, the witnesses called to testify are those who did not experience the death, and, second, those who did experience the death cannot testify.” Young thus concludes: “the narrative or testimony [of the witness] fails in the moment that it matters most.”¹¹⁰

If even first-hand narratives of traumatic events are problematic, owing to the limits of witnessing, what of narratives that are even farther removed from the events themselves? Can such testimonies shed any light on formative and traumatic events such as slavery in the Revolutionary-era United States? Performance scholar Freddie Rokem argues that these removed narratives can actually serve an important purpose of recovering lost histories, as long as the actor functions as a proxy witness testifying on behalf of those who are missing. By witnessing *through* performance, Rokem maintains, actors can “stand in” as complete witnesses, serving an almost ritual function of interpreter of an absent past. “It is this muteness of the ‘complete witnesses’,” he suggests, “that the theatre, when it is performing history, constantly tries to rescue.”¹¹¹ Theatre (or performance) is able to render this muteness intelligible through the actor’s body, which gives spectators a proxy figure upon which to map the missing past. Unlike

¹⁰⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books), 34.

¹¹⁰ Harvey Young, “Historical Whitewash: Remembering Lynching at America’s Black Holocaust Museum,” in *Considering Calamity: Methods for Performance Research*, ed. Linda Ben-Zvi and Tracy C. Davis (Tel Aviv: Assaph Books, 2007), 204.

¹¹¹ Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), xii.

purely representational acting, when an actor “disappears” into a character, acting as witnessing utilizes different aesthetic methods that serve to distance the performer from the character, creating a performed duality wherein the actor is both aesthetically representing a historical person and acting as a “hyper-historian,” commenting on the history being depicted.¹¹² This analysis of the power of theatrical representation relies on a non-realistic alchemy of performance and opens up possibilities for the holes in the past to be recovered through embodied performances.

Debates about how to portray the free and enslaved blacks who inhabited Williamsburg have ensued since the founding of the African American Interpretation Program in the late 1970s.¹¹³ Utilizing a non-realistic aesthetics of witnessing, many of the performances presented by the AAIP feature a hybrid kind of acting or presentation that mixes both first- and third-person interpretation, allowing interpreters to use witnessing through the historical character and the present-day historian as a tactical intervention into the strategic narratives advanced by the CWF’s hierarchy. Mary Hardy, a first-person interpreter who portrays Jane, a free mixed-race woman who lived in Williamsburg at the time of the Revolution, illuminates the importance of this dynamic, suggesting that it is vital that she both represent Jane in a semi-realistic mode and present the history as herself, Mary, in order to emphasize the continuities between Jane’s struggle and the struggle to present black history to occasionally hostile and often ambivalent

¹¹² Rokem, 13.

¹¹³ Wilson. See also Harvey Bakari, interview with Lloyd Dobyns, “African American Interpretation,” podcast transcript, *Colonial Williamsburg*, accessed October 1, 2011, http://www.history.org/podcasts_transcripts/AfricanAmericanInterpretation.cfm.

spectators. While she believes in the importance of witnessing on Jane's behalf, she also argues that she wants to be recognized as "Mary first, everyone else second."¹¹⁴

Hardy's performance consists of a largely realism-based monologue as Jane, followed by a question and answer session with the performer as herself (figs. 2.11 and 2.12). At the September 2011 performance and talk-back that I attended, many of the audience's questions revealed the equivocal though undeniable link that visitors had identified between Jane's history of the site as presented in the monologue and Mary's experience as a person of mixed race performing this role for mostly white spectators. "How does Jane feel?" one visitor asked. "I mean, I know you don't know her, but was she [did she see herself as] more black or white?" Hardy answered this question with a conflation of the character and the actor, saying that, although she doesn't presume to know how Jane felt about her racial identity, she (Hardy) had never really had to think about whether she was more black or more white until she began working at Colonial Williamsburg and fielding questions about her personal identity. "I was never black or white, I was just one of the Hardy girls," she offered.¹¹⁵ When she first started performing at Colonial Williamsburg, however, her light skin, racially ambiguous features, and initial role as an unnamed slave presented a quandary for visitors who could not understand why a white woman was interpreting an enslaved character.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ "Jane's Struggle," *Revolutionary City*, Williamsburg, VA, September 18, 2011.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Mary Hardy, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, September 18, 2011.



Figure 2.11: Mary Hardy as Jane in *Jane's Struggle*. Williamsburg, Virginia, September 18, 2011. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.



Figure 2.12: *Jane's Struggle* post-performance discussion with Hope Evans (left) and Mary Hardy. Williamsburg, Virginia, September 18, 2011. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

Importantly, Hardy created “Jane’s Struggle” herself, with help from AAIP historians who provided an outline of the historical facts associated with Jane, a woman who frequently appears in accounts of early Williamsburg, but without a last name. Hardy emphasized the necessity of the question and answer period that follows the monologue, which allows for a dialectical exploration of the performance and the audience’s understanding of Jane’s history—including the holes in that history, such as the missing surname. This structure, while not perfect, nevertheless helps overcome some of the insufficiencies of mimetic realism as a performance method at historical tourist sites by juxtaposing representational and presentational modes of performance. Performances that utilize “mixed modes of theatrical communication that both present and represent,” Bruce McConachie suggests, are both more effective and morally superior to realism, because they “draw in the viewer to observe realistic portrayal but also distance him or her from the degradation of the role” that might otherwise accrue to the performer.¹¹⁷ This is an especially vital element of performances that represent black histories to largely white audiences, where the potential to recreate and reify the unbalanced power structures being represented is great. Making the performance as much about Mary Hardy, a real, living, contemporary human being, as about the historical (though here embodied) character of Jane emphasizes the importance of witnessing while not quite allowing the spectators to forget that the power relations represented in past continue into the present.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ McConachie, 79.

¹¹⁸ This notion was reaffirmed by Hardy’s story about being called a “nigger” by guests who, apparently, got far too caught up in being “a part of the story” and had no problem locating themselves as bigoted slaveholders in the historical narrative.

Be Part of the Story, But What Part?

Just as interpreters are strategically positioned to reenact sanctioned histories of the past and yet are able to take tactical advantage of their positions as “witnesses” to challenge some of those histories, visitors are likewise interpellated strategically but simultaneously undertake various tactics of resistance. If, as Louis Althusser claims, “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects,” then the prevailing ideology of Colonial Williamsburg certainly functions to interpellate visitors in specific ways according to their already existing differences: for example, while women may imagine or emplace themselves as decision-makers in Revolutionary-era Williamsburg, they cannot be hailed as such because of the ideology of authenticity, accuracy, and participation that structures Colonial Williamsburg’s presentation of itself.¹¹⁹ These strategies of interpellation encourage visitors to “vicariously cast themselves” in the roles of characters from the Revolutionary past, but simultaneously limits the types of roles that visitors are permitted to fill.

Colonial Williamsburg interpellates visitors as participants in history, as expressed by its tagline “Be part of the story.”¹²⁰ Children and adults are encouraged to dress up in colonial garb (figs. 2.13 and 2.14) if they’d like, and all visitors are treated as though they are members of Revolutionary-era Williamsburg’s community. Although there is a certain populism that underlies the project of positioning visitors as part of the story, visitor interaction is actually only permitted within precisely circumscribed limits. In fact, while dressing up in colonial-era costumes is permitted year-round at Colonial Williamsburg, actual reenacting of lifestyles from

¹¹⁹ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 173.

¹²⁰ *Colonial Williamsburg Official Site*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/>.



Figure 2.13: Visitors at Colonial Williamsburg. Williamsburg, Virginia, June 26, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.



Figure 2.14: Visitors at Colonial Williamsburg. Williamsburg, Virginia, June 26, 2010. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

the era is restricted to two weekends per year.¹²¹ During these special weekends, groups of reenactors are permitted to camp on the Palace Green, provided they are precisely “period” in their encampments. Other immersive performances are limited as well; tourists are sometimes allowed to try their hand at the period chores and skills represented at the site, but only in very specific, controlled ways.¹²² Generally, these Revolutionary-era practices are merely explained and enacted by costumed third-person interpreters with little or no active participation from visitors, beyond question and answer sessions. So, although visitors are invited to “be part of the story,” if they are to perceive themselves as such, it is mostly through their own imaginative identification with the featured characters in *Revolutionary City* and other programming rather than through actual participation.

How, then, does Colonial Williamsburg’s ideology interpellate black visitors? What characters are they invited to imaginatively identify with? Generally, Colonial Williamsburg interpellates black tourists by ignoring race altogether and emplacing all visitors, regardless of race, as an ideal (i.e., white) spectator. The strategy of ignoring visitors’ racial identification is, in some ways, a strategy for survival; there is no doubt that Colonial Williamsburg would lose what few visitors of color—and presumably many white visitors as well—they currently have were they to begin treating current black visitors the way that black inhabitants would have been treated in the Revolutionary-era city. It is, however, also a reflection of tourism in general.

Tourists, by definition a subset of the population with disposable income and the ability to leave

¹²¹ Eric Gibson and Grosvenor Merle-Smith, interview with the author, Williamsburg, VA, June 26, 2010.

¹²² There are some highly participatory activities at the site, particularly those geared towards children. Generally, these consist of activities such as the “Fife and Drums March,” in which visitors are invited to march from the Capitol to the Palace Green, following the fife and drums troupe of interpreters. Other activities involve making a souvenir that children can take home.

jobs and other responsibilities in order to travel, are largely white. Those that are not are nevertheless interpellated that way, especially in opposition to the black experiences represented at Colonial Williamsburg; as Lisa Woolfork explains, “whiteness becomes an invisible entitlement of this tourist experience.”¹²³ Visitors are positioned as non-racial, but, because there is a presumption of the spectator’s position as white (and, therefore, aligned with a slave-owning society that was actively engaged in the continued oppression of persons of color), they are interpellated in opposition to the black bodies on display in the living history museum setting.

This positioning undoubtedly provokes ambivalence for many visitors, and for visitors of color, the result is that there are few entry points into emancipatory experiences. Jill Dolan, writing about the positioning of the female spectator, suggests that, because the “ideal spectator” in Western theatre has always been presumed to be white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male, theatrical performance has long served to naturalize the ideology of *that* ideal spectator.¹²⁴ This naturalization, she continues, has prevented the female spectator full access to the world of the performance; she must either identify with the passive female victim (in an act of masochism) or with the male hero, wherein she “becomes complicit in her own indirect objectification.”¹²⁵ A similar dynamic emerges in museum performance that attempts to represent black experience. Because the ideal visitor is white, black tourists have few opportunities to imagine themselves as “part of the story” in an emancipatory way, outside the trappings of masochism or complicity inherent in a slave-owning society built on the fictions of racial difference.

¹²³ Woolfork, 186.

¹²⁴ Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

Just as, in Dolan's understanding, the ideal spectator has long been understood as male, the ideal citizen in the United States has been understood as white. At this site of national remembrance and celebration, the invisible privilege of whiteness can be exposed in an exploration of the most popular figures: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry. These are the best known of the Founding Fathers associated with Revolutionary-era Williamsburg; all three were slave owners. For visitors who travel to the site, the assumed position is that of the patriotic founder; to accept such positioning is to accept the implication of whiteness and an acceptance of slavery.

When visitors echo a hearty "huzzah!" when the fiery Patrick Henry shouts about liberty, they are simultaneously echoing the inherent contradictions in his position and those that were later enshrined in the Constitution. It is in these moments that a fractious multiplicity of stories and spaces becomes vital, as do performative tactics that enable the visitor to undermine the naturalization of the ideal citizen and the ideal museum visitor. The more stories that are told by both visitors and interpreters, the more narratives will be available for visitors to identify with. The more spaces that are explained from the perspective of the black inhabitants, the more affectively those spaces can perform their multiple meanings. The more opportunities people have to engage with and imaginatively inhabit multiple black characters—free, enslaved, patriot, loyalist, farmer, urbanite, man, woman—the harder it becomes to unreservedly celebrate the words and deeds of the Founding Fathers. Simultaneously, it will become easier to see those figures, along with the "lesser knowns" of history as fraught, complicated individuals implicated in and influenced by a heterogeneous society. Perhaps then the tactic of prismatic perspective will help visitors break down some of the sedimented prejudices that Young describes when he

argues that “the mystery of blackness, which manages to become a *fact* through repeated deployment across a range of bodies, encourages the (mis)identification of individuated bodies (*a body*) as the black body. The latter replaces the former.”¹²⁶ Such tactical engagement with the spaces and performances of multiple black experiences can disrupt the “mysterious blackness” that still clings to many representations of slave life in the United States and offer black and mixed race visitors to places of national memory emancipatory parts they can play and narratives they can celebrate.

¹²⁶ Young, *Embodying Black Experience*, 7.

Chapter 3

“This is the Place”¹:

Performing the Sacred in Nauvoo and Carthage, Illinois

My wound is geography. It is also my anchorage, my port of call.
—Pat Conroy, *Prince of Tides*

We'll find the place that God for us prepared,
Far away in the West.
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.
—“Come, Come, Ye Saints,” LDS Hymn

At the center of the doctrinal and cultural identity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lies a geographical paradox: members and outside observers alike fetishize the religion's representative “Americanness” while simultaneously emphasizing the church's global reach and the rebellious acts of early members who resisted the laws of and ultimately

¹ Portions of this chapter first appeared in Lindsay Adamson Livingston, ““This is the Place”: Performance and the Production of Space in Mormon Cultural Memory,” in *Enacting History*, ed. Scott Magelssen and Rhona Justice Malloy (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 22-40. In reference to “this is the place”: in 1847, when Brigham Young and the first set of Mormon pioneers descended into the Salt Lake Valley, Young stopped his carriage and declared, “It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on.” Quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930), 224. A shortened version of the refrain, “this is the place,” echoed among the exhausted and relieved pioneers. The phrase has come to have significant cultural purchase in contemporary Mormonism, as it represents to believers the moment when God revealed that they could stop wandering and establish a rooted community—their exodus was complete upon arrival at *this* place.

abandoned the United States of America.² Indeed, fundamental to both the origin myth and the continuing identity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) are the ideas both of the church as uniquely and stridently American and of early church members as migratory and willing to abdicate their national affiliation. Mormon origin stories focus on Joseph Smith and the particular characteristics of the United States in the early nineteenth century—freedom of religion, individualism, open space—that enabled his “restoration” of an ancient biblical gospel. Early in its history, however, the church was also heavily involved in missionary efforts in Europe and elsewhere, a practice that led thousands to convert to Mormonism and subsequently immigrate to the United States, making the early church a multinational (though still overwhelmingly white and Western) entity. Although the initial vision of this pan-national movement continues to loom large over the imaginary consciousness of church members, it is the ensuing westward migration—again, a distinctly American trope—that is often seen as most foundational to LDS identity.³

This fundamental tension reflects greater paradoxes at the heart of both Mormon belief and the relationship between performance and placemaking at historical tourist sites. Terry L. Givens, in *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* suggests that the entire doctrinal structure of the LDS faith is built upon a series of seemingly irreconcilable polarities, including

² See, for example, Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993); Richard Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper One, 2007); Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and Douglas Davies, “Time, Place and Mormon Sense of Self,” in *Religion, Identity and Change: Perspectives of Global Transformations*, ed. Simon Coleman and Peter Jeffrey Collins (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 107-18.

³ This, too, however, has global implications. As often as the LDS migration is referred to in uniquely US American terms, it is just as frequently typified as an “exodus” with all the Judeo-Christian religious connotation that term contains.

the spatial and social tension between exile and assimilation.⁴ This notion of paradox as central to the Mormon belief system is evident not only in the push and pull between American and global identities within the faith, but also in the placemaking performances featured in Nauvoo, Illinois, one of Mormonism's most sacred sites. One of the primary tensions in Mormonism, Givens points out, is between authoritarianism and individualism, a contestation that is also found within the curator / tourist relationship—especially at sites such as Nauvoo where attempts to control the performed and spatialized historical narrative of a site translate into contests of religious faith.

In the mid-nineteenth century, after successive expulsions from several towns, an extermination order issued by Missouri's governor, and the death of their prophet and founder, over seventy thousand Mormon believers trekked west.⁵ The majority of these pioneers ended up in an area of the Mexican Territory that would later become Utah. The stops made along this trek (both scheduled and impromptu), along with sites central to the nineteenth-century founding of the religion, have become pilgrimage destinations for contemporary LDS members, locations where space, performance, and memory work together to codify a sanctioned historical narrative of the church's founding and early existence.

Such narratives can, however, obscure the contestation that was and remains central to the Nauvoo experience. After the founding of the church in upstate New York, members gradually moved westward, driven out of one area after another. LDS towns were established in

⁴ Terryl Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiv-xv.

⁵ See Richard Edmond Bennett, *We'll Find the Place: the Mormon Exodus, 1846-1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); Joseph E. Brown, *The Mormon Trek West: the Journey of American Exiles* (New York: Doubleday, 1980); William Hill, *The Mormon Trail: Yesterday and Today* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1996); Craig S. Smith, "The 1847 Mormon Pioneer Trek," *Overland Journal* 27.1 (Spring 2009): 3-18; Roberts, *A Comprehensive History*; and Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*.

New York, Ohio, and Missouri before the Saints finally settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, and built a theocratic haven on the marshy banks of the Mississippi.⁶ Smith named the city “Nauvoo,” a Hebrew word meaning “beautiful plantation”—a bit of a stretch considering that the area was “wooded and trackless and swamps covered the lowlands.”⁷ Nevertheless, the name resonated with members, reflecting the potential of the land nestled in a bend of the sparkling Mississippi River; historian Fawn M. Brodie suggests it “had the melancholy music of a mourning dove’s call and somehow matched the magic of the site.”⁸ The town grew exponentially over the next few years, eventually housing nearly 12,000 inhabitants and rivaling Chicago as the most populous city in Illinois.

More importantly, Nauvoo was where the LDS church would begin to crystallize into the institution it is today. It was there that Smith established the first auto-theocratic society of Saints (Brigham Young would helm the second, in Salt Lake City), encouraged communal living in keeping with his goal to create the Kingdom of God on Earth, and instituted the influential and schismatic doctrines of baptism for the dead, plural marriage, eternal “intelligences,” and the plurality of gods. It was also in Nauvoo that the LDS temple ceremony achieved its fullest expression, cementing the ritual for generations of temple-going members. These doctrines sowed seeds of discord, however, and Nauvoo also became the site of schisms between early members. When Joseph and his brother Hyrum were killed in 1844, the church split into various factions, often separating along the fractures of these doctrines; the best-known Mormon

⁶ Members frequently refer to themselves as “Saints,” as in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day *Saints*. This was especially true in the church’s early days.

⁷ Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 256.

⁸ *Ibid.*

denominations today include mainline Mormons (LDS), Fundamentalist or polygamist Mormons (FLDS) and the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or RLDS).⁹ Although it would thrive for only five years before members were again driven westward, Nauvoo remains a potent symbol in the various Mormon sects of the heady days of prophecy, communality, and theocracy—a magical site that, with centripetal force, draws tourists and pilgrims back to its sacred space.¹⁰

This chapter succumbs to that force and travels to Nauvoo, the site of Joseph Smith's final attempt to usher in God's Kingdom on earth, and to nearby Carthage, the site of his death, to explore ways in which performance is marshaled in the service of establishing place and communicating memory and history at religious tourist sites. It considers the nature of sacred space and how it is contested, colonized, and produced at such locations and investigates how the various LDS church-sanctioned performances featured in Nauvoo and Carthage help to define a spiritual community of believers joined not only by their shared religion, but also by the religion's history, which members then adopt as their own. The "spatial maps," or imaginary spatio-performative landscapes created through LDS historical sites and performances, have influenced the cultural experiences of generation after generation of church members by codifying history through performance and the production of spatial meaning. This tightly controlled, regularly reenacted, and spiritually invested history is re-presented to and re-lived by church members who participate in heritage tourism that is meant to give physical legitimacy to

⁹ Throughout this chapter, I will use "LDS" to refer to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Community of Christ" to refer to the former Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (unless speaking of the church historically, in which case I will use "RLDS"), and "Mormon" to refer to the faith tradition in general.

¹⁰ For a more complete discussion of the centripetal and centrifugal nature of sacred space, see Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*, exp. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), esp. 19.

history and doctrine and to build a sense of spiritual community rooted in an “American religion” that is rapidly becoming a global one.

From the interplay of performance and space in Nauvoo emerges a uniquely sacred place, one that reflects the distinct doctrinal practices of the contemporary LDS church, particularly of ritual temple ceremonies and genealogy. Just as geographical sites carry memory, so too does performance. Authorities overseeing church history sites have seized upon this notion, and many tourist locales associated with the LDS church feature formal performances meant to enhance visitors’ experiences and increase their memorial identification with the site and the events that purportedly transpired there. Many of these performances function commemoratively, and remind the LDS community “of its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative.”¹¹ Tying commemorative ceremonies with ritual performance, Paul Connerton evocatively argues that the “image of the past” sustained by the master narrative of commemorative ceremonies is “conveyed and sustained by ritual performances”—in the case of Nauvoo, these ritual performances reaffirm particular, sometimes controversial, narratives of the LDS religion’s founding.¹² These performances, which provide just one way in which “the images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained” ritually, also serve as a way for tourist-spectators to further connect to the site, seemingly erasing the spatio-temporal boundaries keeping them away from what Pierre Nora terms a “true memory” of the founding of the religion.¹³

¹¹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Connerton, 37; Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 13.

While this traditional type of performance is certainly more visible, there are other subtler performance elements that heavily influence the meaning and efficacy of church history sites as examples of Nora's *lieux de mémoire*. Most intriguing is the function of space. Suspended as such sites are between history, memory, and contemporary phenomenological experience, they trip lightly between functioning as absolute, sacred space and present, social space.

Compellingly, the space at these sites is expected to “perform”—to live up to the imaginary geography church members and others have created in their minds. Geographer Karen Till describes locations such as Nauvoo that are intensely imagined by certain communities as sites that bear peoples’ “affective attachment[s],” a concept structurally similar to Marianne Hirsch’s notion of postmemory. In each case, people’s memories of a site (or in Hirsch’s case, of family members or events) are shaped and influenced not by personal encounters but rather by the site and memory in general as mediated through aesthetic representations of and familial stories about the place.¹⁴

Nauvoo has become just such a place for members of the LDS community. Very few members of the church live in the area any longer; those that do are often associated in some way with the hospitality mission of the town as a performative tourist site. This fact, joined by Nauvoo’s chronological and spatial distance from Salt Lake City, the geographical heart of contemporary LDS culture, situates Nauvoo firmly within the LDS imaginary as a postmemorial site, “defined [not] by recollections of ‘firsthand’ knowledge but rather creatively imagined

¹⁴ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 15; Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

through the reconstructions and repetitive viewings of images, stories, and other representations by second or later generations.”¹⁵

In the contemporary LDS church, for example, members are often exhorted not only to remember the experiences of early church members in Nauvoo, but also to emulate and reenact the physical and moral fortitude those members demonstrated. Using “Nauvoo” as shorthand for trials of faith, Bruce C. Hafen reminds members that, since early church members were able to conquer their difficulties, so, too, can contemporary believers. “Sooner or later,” Hafen suggests, “we may have our own kind of Nauvoo, perhaps more than once. We will have our own frozen rivers and parched deserts to cross, a moral or financial or intellectual wilderness to tame.”¹⁶ Curatorial uses of performance reinforce this intergenerational and metaphorical connection, creating performative spaces that collapse the temporal boundaries between past and present and attempt to increase visitors’ connections to their histories through spatialized memorial performances.

As I demonstrated in my discussion of both Tombstone and Colonial Williamsburg, however, curatorial desires and intentions do not tell a complete story of touristic experience. At Nauvoo, as at other historical tourist sites, the presented narrative is troubled by the embodied presence of visitors—the very people for whom the site is maintained. These visitors bring with them different beliefs, agendas, and expectations, and the gaps and slips between the presented spatial experience and visitors’ expectations allow tourists and pilgrims alike to construct their own experiences of sacred touristic space. In addition to an analysis of the curatorial intention at

¹⁵ Till, *The New Berlin*, 15.

¹⁶ Bruce C. Hafen, “When do the Angels Come?,” *Ensign*, April 1992, accessed April 8, 2011, http://lds.org/ensign/1992/04/when-do-the-angels-come?lang=eng&query=nauvoo#pop_001.

Nauvoo (itself problematized by the competing Mormon sects that own different parts of the historical area), this chapter also undertakes an investigation of touristic experience in Nauvoo, paying particular attention to ways in which tourists utilize their own tactics to contest the curatorial strategies present at the site.

The chapter begins with an exploration of Nauvoo-era Mormonism; in particular, Joseph Smith's life, influence, and the controversies engendered by some of his more radical theological claims. This history leads into a performance analysis of Nauvoo through the lens of the two main sects of Mormonism that own property in Nauvoo, the contemporary LDS church and the Community of Christ church. The rest of the chapter primarily considers the contemporary LDS church and their investment in and grappling with the spatio-performative meaning of Nauvoo as a tourist site. First, I consider the importance of surrogation and the role of performance in the politics of succession through an examination of the performative space of Smith's site of martyrdom and the LDS "succession miracle" wherein church members "saw" Brigham Young turn in to Smith during a sermon after Smith's death. The next section looks at the intersection of pilgrimage, performance, and ritual in "Nauvoo Pageant—A Tribute to Joseph Smith," a pageant produced annually by the LDS church. Following this analysis, I investigate the function of ritual performances within the sacred spaces of Nauvoo and the restored LDS temple. Finally, using the multiple definitions of genealogy as tools, I excavate the contemporary meaning of Nauvoo as a tourist site and offer sites of tactical resistance that are available to visitors to the site.

Contested Nauvoo: Locating Joseph Smith

For contemporary tourists and pilgrims who travel to Nauvoo, one person in particular permeates the space: Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (fig. 3.1). In the early nineteenth century, Joseph Smith lived in Palmyra, a small farm town located in an area of upstate New York that was so swept up in the heavy evangelizing of the Second Great Awakening that it came to be known as the “Burned-Over District”—a prime location for the founding of one of the United States’ longest-lasting and furthest-reaching restorationist religions. Frustrated with the vituperative sermons given by and the animosity



Figure 3.1: Joseph Smith, Jr. Portrait photograph by W.B. Carson, c1879. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

between the leaders of the various sects, when Smith was fourteen years old, he withdrew into a grove of trees behind his home to pray and seek guidance as to which congregation to join.¹⁷ It was here, he claimed, that he had a vision wherein God instructed him not to join any existing churches; rather, he was to found a new religion, one that would restore the original doctrinal tenets established by Jesus Christ and the Old Testament prophets who came before him.¹⁸ By repairing to the woods—a space he chose for its quiet privacy—Smith gave the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the ideal setting for a foundational act, spatially rooted in “Western Romanticism and Jacksonian democracy.”¹⁹

Along with its important role in establishing the spatial legitimacy of the LDS origin narrative, the place of the Burned-Over District functioned in another vital way: as what Joseph Roach calls a “vortex of behavior,” a spatial “center of cultural self-invention through the restoration of behavior.” He explains:

Although such a zone or district seems to offer a place for transgression, for things that couldn’t happen otherwise or elsewhere, in fact what it provides is far more official: a place in which everyday practices and attitudes may be legitimated, “brought out into the open,” reinforced, celebrated, or intensified. When this happens . . . condensational events result. The principle characteristic of such events is that they gain a powerful

¹⁷ Joseph Smith, “Joseph Smith – History,” *Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 1:8-14.

¹⁸ Except where it is important to note discrepancies in or significant challenges to Smith’s story, I take the dates and general narrative of the founding of the church from the LDS-sanctioned scriptural account contained in “Joseph Smith – History.”

¹⁹ Givens, xiv.

enough hold on collective memory that they will survive the transformation or the relocation of the spaces in which they first flourished.²⁰

In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach applies the term “vortices of behavior” primarily to “carnival space”—the spatial intersection of commerce and pleasure. But his concept can also elucidate the spatial meaning of the Burned-Over District as a place and a space that allowed for a different, also seemingly transgressive, performance: the performance of the sacred. Smith found himself in a geographically liminal borderland (until the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, western New York was fairly isolated) and separated from the enlightenment ideals that characterized rhetoric in many urban centers. This borderland and the spatial conception of the Burned-Over District as a behavioral vortex enabled the performance of transgressively sacred practices: the young boy saw angels, received revelation, and brought forth new scripture. This was only a seeming transgression, however; in reality, Smith was replicating the sacred experiences of prophets and visionaries throughout human history. The everyday practice of communicating with God was thus brought out into the open and intensified, creating a rupture wherein the condensational event of the church’s founding could take place. This foundation took hold of members’ collective imagination and memory, and not only allowed the church to survive but also instigated the westward migration.

The church’s founding, particularly its genesis in the vortex of behavior that was the Burned-Over District, did much to ground the history and doctrine of the religion in a distinct geographical location, a characteristic that continues to shape the faith and its common language. After Smith had his originary vision, he worked to construct the basic tenets of the new

²⁰ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 28.

religion—a project that culminated in the publication, in 1830, of the Book of Mormon. This book of scripture, reprising the geographical specificity found in many of Smith’s early visions, claims areas of the Americas as Zion and the Garden of Eden and posits Judeo-Christian ancestry for some indigenous peoples of the Americas.²¹ Eleven days after the book’s publication, Smith officially organized the church. Smith, who had endured much ridicule for his claims of heavenly visitors and gold plates, then began receiving geographically specific revelations about and instructions for members of the fledgling church. The first such prophecy came in late 1830, and led the Saints to relocate in Ohio.²²

Over the next decade, Smith received several such revelations, each compelling members to move on to a new location; such prophecies rooted Smith’s restorationist project in the language and metaphors of geography and spatial legitimacy. Because each of these moves were, according to Smith and his followers, both sanctioned and instigated by God, the very land upon which they walked and to which they migrated was holy. When the Saints were commanded to move to Independence, Missouri, for example, it was, Smith informed them, because this was “the land which [God had] appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.”²³ Finally, after being driven out of successive towns in New York, Ohio, and Missouri, early members settled in Commerce, Illinois, a small town on the Mississippi, and renamed it Nauvoo.

²¹ *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989). Whether the book was written or merely translated and edited by Joseph Smith depends, of course, on one’s belief in the history and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members believe the book is scripture written by ancient prophets in the Americas and that Joseph Smith was enlisted by God to translate and compile those prophetic accounts.

²² Joseph Smith, ed., *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989) 37; 38:31-2. The *Doctrine and Covenants* is a compilation of prophecies and teachings of some of the early church leaders, especially Joseph Smith. In the LDS Church and some other Mormon denominations, the book is considered scripture on par with the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

²³ *Doctrine and Covenants*, 57:1.

In twenty-first-century Nauvoo, the historical district is nestled between the east bank of the Mississippi and a hill that boasts a reconstruction of the original LDS temple that stood on the site (fig. 3.2). The neat spatial separation of the historical and lived areas of the town translates into a clear physical divide between the “Mormon” space and the lived space of the town (fig. 3.3). The LDS church, although its members participate in service-oriented outreach programs in the town, encourages this spatial segregation, which is supported for practical, social reasons: the church wants to maintain and reinforce the sacredness of the site by governing both



Figure 3.2: View of the Rebuilt Nauvoo Temple from the Historic District. Nauvoo, Illinois, July 8, 2009. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

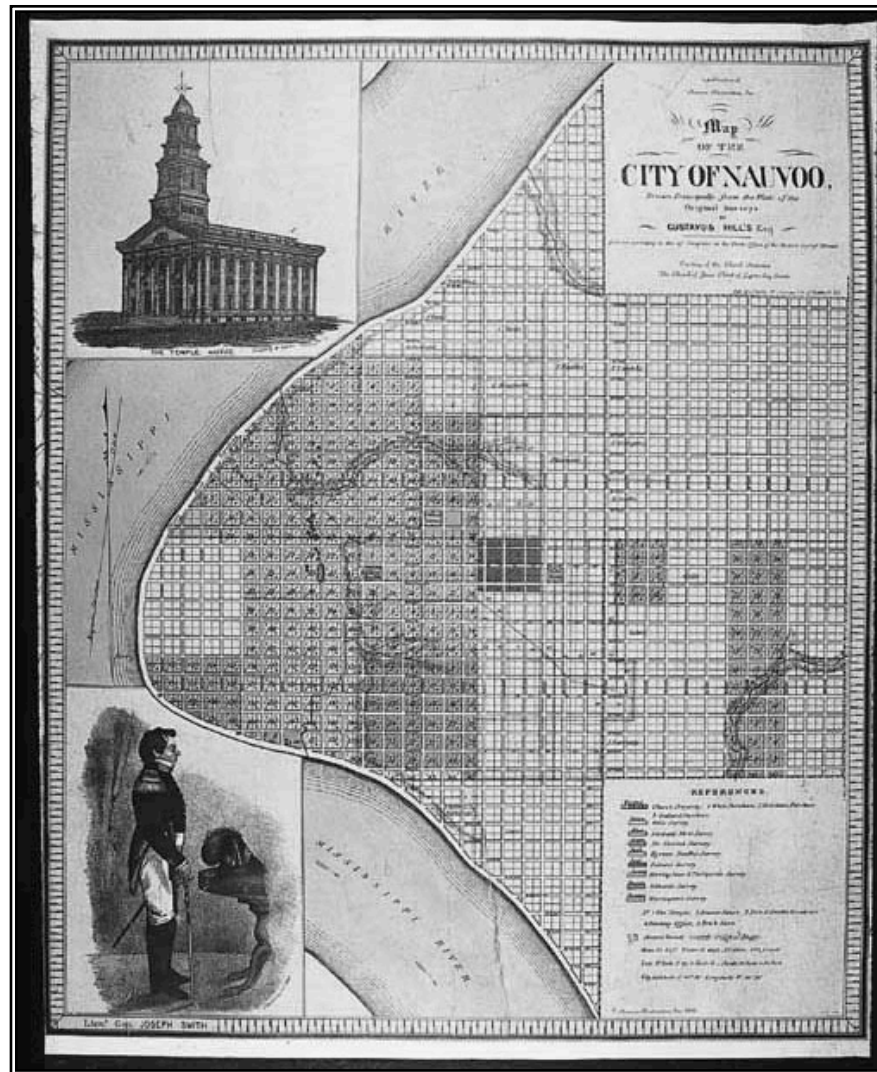


Figure 3.3: Map of the City of Nauvoo, 1844. Drafted by Gustavus Hills, lithograph by J. Childs. Shaded portions on the left of the map the historic section of Nauvoo; the temple lot is the darkest shaded square. Image courtesy of BYU Studies.

the stories told and activities permitted there. Explanations of the site’s historical and religious significance are related by either missionaries (LDS) or official guides (Community of Christ); there are few chances, if any, for visitors to obtain unsanctioned versions of these revised narratives. Neither food nor souvenirs are sold in the historical section; smoking, drinking, and rowdy behavior are not tolerated. This control over what types of tourist performances are

allowed serves the dual purpose of reinforcing a certain level of sanctity at the site and emphasizing the authenticity of the historical experience. Since the historical location is effectively separate from the sites of consumption in the town, curators can more completely manipulate the district's spatial and performed "mood" and thus exert a remarkable level of control over touristic encounters.

This straightforward division between Mormon and non-Mormon space in Nauvoo does not, however, capture the full complexity of how this site performs its past for visitors, and relying upon traditional markers of sacred carved out from profane space (as such a division does) actually elides some of the most compelling contestation of sacred space that lies at the historical and doctrinal heart of this heritage tourist site. Although the town does, indeed, separate into geographically bounded clusters of spatial meaning (historical/sacred and lived/profane) whose borders are policed and maintained by control over the performances and narratives that are permitted within the boundaries, this does not mean that the respective spaces thus possess stable meanings: places are always contested, and sacred places especially so.²⁴ In Nauvoo, this contestation is enacted by and through two divergent faith traditions, each with its roots in Joseph Smith's early gospel.

Smith had always advocated for what he called the "Kingdom of God" on earth; unlike its metaphorical meaning for other religions, this phrase encapsulated a clear socio-political mandate for Smith—he claimed he was commanded by God to establish a theocratic society, one ruled by church leaders above and beyond the US government. Nauvoo was the first place where Smith was able to make this political arrangement work; here, he was not only Prophet and

²⁴ David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, Introduction to *American Sacred Space*, ed. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), esp. 18.

President of the church, but also treasurer, “Trustee-in-Trust,” and Lieutenant-General of the Nauvoo Legion, the local militia. It was also here that Smith’s experiment with communalism, the United Order of Enoch, peaked and was discarded.²⁵

Alongside Smith’s moves toward establishing autocratic authority over the church’s finances and militia power, he also delivered revelations regarding three of the most controversial doctrines in early Mormonism: the plurality of gods, polygamy, and baptisms for the dead. These three doctrines—especially polygamy—served to permanently fracture the fledgling faith into several denominations. After Smith was martyred on June 27, 1844, the church split into two primary factions: one, led by Smith’s son and supported by his first wife, Emma, that disallowed polygamy and temple worship, and one, helmed by Brigham Young, that built an entire society on the practice of plural marriage as legitimized through temple practices.²⁶ The former renamed itself the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS), while the latter retained the name the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). These two denominations (RLDS has since changed its name to Community of Christ) share custodianship of Nauvoo, and each has remarkably different ways of performing their imagined histories and creating their sacred places.

²⁵ The Order required members to combine and donate all their income, which was then divided and redistributed among members by church authorities. The Order itself was ultimately rejected in Nauvoo, but contemporary members of the LDS Church continue to believe in an impending mandate to live the “Law of Consecration,” a “divine principle whereby men and women voluntarily dedicate their time, talents, and material wealth to the establishment and building up of God’s kingdom.” “Consecrate, Law of Consecration,” *The Guide to the Scriptures*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://lds.org/scriptures/gs/consecrate-law-of-consecration?lang=eng>.

²⁶ When the Utah church discontinued the practice of polygamy in 1890, that branch of the faith further fractured, again over the issue of plural marriage. Today, there are several small sects that continue to practice polygamy and use LDS scripture as the basis of this practice. The best known of these groups is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS), whose current president, Warren Jeffs, was recently convicted of charges of sex crimes relating to his practice of polygamy.

It is virtually impossible to convince the young men and women who guide tours of the Community of Christ-owned properties in Nauvoo to talk about polygamy. Although they still believe in Smith's first vision, his early incarnation of the Mormon faith, and the Book of Mormon, the former RLDS church has since moved more toward mainline Protestantism and away from its Mormon roots. Smith's doctrine of plural marriage has ultimately become what historian Philip Burnham has described as "a family secret in Nauvoo—everyone is pledged not to discuss it in front of strangers."²⁷ Tourists, whether members of a Mormon denomination or not, have become these strangers. Nearly all scholars who have studied the church's Illinois period agree that it was Smith who introduced polygamy to the young congregation; this is entirely denied by Community of Christ believers, who lay the blame for such aberration solely at the feet of Brigham Young. What is clear is that Smith's own wife, Emma, vehemently opposed the practice, and, when she supported the Reorganized denomination over the contingency that followed Brigham Young to Utah, chose a version of the faith that reviled so-called "spiritual wifery."²⁸

Today, the Community of Christ curates the properties formerly owned by Joseph and Emma, including the so-called "Mansion House," Joseph and Emma's large clapboard house that also served as lodging for incoming Saints and visiting dignitaries; the Homestead, the small cabin the Smiths built upon first arriving in Nauvoo; a reconstruction of Joseph's Red Brick

²⁷ Philip Burnham, *How the Other Half Lived: A People's Guide to American Historic Sites* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 134.

²⁸ Emma Hale Smith undoubtedly knew of her husband's instigation of and participation in polygamy; it was not until after Smith's death that she claimed he had nothing to do with the principle beyond efforts to quell its practice among the Nauvoo Saints. Prior to Joseph's death, there are many documented instances of Emma's displeasure with Joseph's "revelations" about plural marriage, suggesting she knew he was participating in the practice. See Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Store; and, most importantly, the Smith family cemetery, the final resting place of Joseph, Emma, and Hyrum, among other friends and family members. The Community of Christ offers guided tours of all their properties for a small fee; going on this tour is the only way to enter these sites. The imposition of a small entrance fee serves to demarcate the Community of Christ areas from the LDS areas, and performs the function of dissuading overly casual tourists from entering, making it easier for the curators to control the experience of visiting the Smith family properties.

The fee, and the bounded spatial experience of touring the Community of Christ's properties, also ensures that the narrative that tourists receive is filtered through the memorial politics espoused by the Community of Christ. Therefore, the story of these sites is inherently, if not overtly, anti-polygamist and pro-Emma Smith. These sites, curated by a single denomination, are some of the most important in Nauvoo, and this version of history is validated by the Community of Christ's performances of ownership and authority, which are played out spatially through the arrangement of Joseph, Emma, and Hyrum Smith's graves and theatrically through the guides' performances of historical authority.

The primary embodiment of these performances of ownership is the gravesite of Joseph, Emma, and Hyrum Smith. All memorials, Erika Doss argues, mark "social and political interests and [claim] particular historical narratives."²⁹ In the case of the Smith gravesite, the narrative that is advanced is one of monogamy and fidelity: in death, as in life, the memorial seems to say, Emma is Joseph's only wife (fig. 3.4). Traditionally, husbands and wives are buried together. By limiting Joseph's companions in the grave to his legal wife and his brother (leaving no room for

²⁹ Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 9.



Figure 3.4: Joseph, Emma, and Hyrum Smith's Gravesite. Nauvoo, Illinois, April 6, 2008.
Wikipedia.com. Photograph courtesy of Cambene.

“spiritual” wives), the Community of Christ spatially limits Joseph’s possible relationships, and thus marks its own particular interests and narratives. Indeed, if any plural relationship is implied by the Smiths’s final resting place, it is between Emma and two men: a memorial argument that the three inhabitants of the graves—Joseph, Emma, and Hyrum—are at the doctrinal and historical center of the church, Emma assuming the same importance as her husband and his brother. Through its material claim on certain social, political, and historical interests, the gravesite functions as performative space, circumscribing the kinds of commemoration allowed at this place. Joseph Smith is to be mourned as both Prophet and devoted husband, Emma as steadfast wife, and Hyrum as Joseph’s companion at the moment of death.

For members of the LDS church, the spatial configuration of the Smith family cemetery challenges their narrative of Brigham Young's continuation of the early church's doctrines and practices, spatially suggesting that Joseph's church ended in Nauvoo. The Reorganized Saints, who later became the Community of Christ, maintain that Young was the one who introduced polygamy and led the majority of the church astray by transplanting members to the Salt Lake Valley and normalizing the doctrine of plural marriage. Encouraged by Emma, the Reorganized church recognized her and Joseph's son Joseph Smith III as the rightful heir to Joseph as prophet and president and denied Joseph's role in introducing polygamy into the church. Locating Joseph, finally, in the family plot between Emma and Hyrum, the Community of Christ has created a place that materially embodies its claims about the church's founding and inspired progression: Joseph attached to only one wife, and the authority of the priesthood, and thus the administration of the church, established within the Smith family.

During the Community of Christ tours, little is said about the schism that occurred after Joseph's death, and nothing at all is offered about polygamy, in spite of the fact that its practice characterized the church's Illinois period, led to Smith's death, and instigated the denominational split. As Burnham, paraphrasing a member of the Community of Christ church, explains, "reticence to talk about polygamy is typical," particularly since groups that tour the sites are often composed of members of both churches, and the guides are "anxious to avoid doctrinal disputes."³⁰ This avoidance of polygamy also serves another important function: it allows the space of the site to perform as sacred in a unique way for each individual visitor, unencumbered by the intrusion of what remains a volatile historical dispute.

³⁰ Burnham, 136.

In the introduction to their collection *American Sacred Space*, David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal take a relative view of the creation of sacred space. “The sacred,” they claim, “is nothing more nor less than a notional supplement to the ongoing cultural work of sacralizing time, persons, and social relations. Situational, relational, and frequently, if not inherently, contested, the sacred is a by-product of this work of sacralization.”³¹ Chidester and Linenthal thus challenge the essentialized meaning of the sacred as a representational term, arguing instead that its meaning is socially constructed and therefore relative—constantly in flux, with ever-shifting boundaries. For members of both the contemporary LDS and Community of Christ churches, Nauvoo is a sacred place, produced by each denomination’s continued veneration of Joseph Smith and his project of creating a Kingdom of God in this small river town. This sacralization, however, is instigated and maintained through denominationally distinct placemaking performances that contest Smith’s role in the creation of problematic doctrines such as polygamy.

The Community of Christ’s guided tours function as placemaking performances, the guides advancing a view of Smith that, while at odds with much of the scholarly history available, nevertheless sacralizes the place of Nauvoo for members of their faith. These performances effectively separate the profane space of the LDS sections of town, where curators acknowledge and even celebrate polygamy, from the sacred space of Emma and Joseph’s shared places, sites that are ghosted by the much-celebrated relationship of the prophet and his (first) wife. Clearly, the importance of these architectural structures is that, in an affective way, they bear witness that Smith did, in fact, exist. What the buildings cannot reveal, however, are the

³¹ Chidester and Linenthal, 9.

contours of Smith's intimate relationships—relationships that may appear to be mere gossip or historic sensationalism at first, but actually go to the very heart of the deep doctrinal, spatial, and performative disputes between the two churches that curate Historic Nauvoo.

Placemaking performances, such as the Community of Christ's guided tours, serve to “mediate and construct social memory and identity by localizing personal emotions and defining social relations to the past.”³² By locating Joseph Smith in the spaces he inhabited with Emma, these performances emplace the enigmatic founder of the Mormon faith, physically establishing him as an easy-to-understand family man who tried to prevent his nascent flock from detouring into the evils of polygamy. This allows people who visit, regardless of their belief in Smith's prophetic calling, a way to understand him and define themselves in relation to him: he was a simple husband who loved his (only) wife. Not surprisingly, the placemaking performances enacted by the contemporary LDS church are more complex in how they engage with the history of Joseph Smith and polygamy.

The LDS church presents several different formal performances in Nauvoo throughout the year; some are offered year-round, while others are performed for only one month during the summer. Of the summer performances, the best-known is the pageant. Alongside the pageant, though, the church also offers short (around half an hour) scenes reenacting occurrences from the Nauvoo period. Each of these outdoor performances, collectively called “Nauvoo Remembered Historical Vignettes,” is a documentary performance based on records, sermons, and letters from the period and enacted in site-specific locations throughout the town.

³² Till, *The New Berlin*, 8.

The Nauvoo Remembered vignette “Letters of Emma and Joseph” presents a sentimentalized portrait of Smith’s marriage to Emma. Narrated by Joseph’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, the script consists mostly of actual letters exchanged by Joseph and Emma throughout their life together. The performance presents an accurate reflection of Emma’s devotion to her husband and his reciprocal love, but also, predictably, obscures some of the more volatile disagreements between the pair, offering a one-dimensional representation of marital bliss (fig. 3.5). At the time that many of these letters would have been written, Joseph and Emma would have been embroiled in an often public dispute over the merits of polygamy, simultaneously living and warring over “the principle.”

None of this conflict is directly represented by the vignette; Paul Walstad, a member of the LDS church’s Nauvoo directing staff says that this is because the church hierarchy does not want to alienate anyone who may come to the performances: Community of Christ members, LDS members, or anyone else. Unsurprisingly, polygamy remains a fairly divisive issue not only among the different LDS sects but also within mainline Mormonism—and the LDS church is intent on utilizing Nauvoo not as an opportunity for promoting historical accuracy, but rather as a venue for “preaching the gospel with power.”³³ The clearest visible representation of the deep divide between the two sects that curate Nauvoo happens at the very beginning of the vignette. In an attempt to reinforce the spatial authenticity of the town and the testimony-building performance, the actors playing Joseph and Emma walk from the historical Smith residence, nicknamed “the Mansion House.” Because the Mansion House is owned and maintained by the Community of Christ, however, the LDS actors are not allowed to emerge from the structure

³³ Paul Walstad, interview with the author, Bountiful, UT, January 15, 2011.



Figure 3.5: “Letters of Joseph and Emma.” Nauvoo, Illinois, July 12, 2009. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

itself but must, instead, rather awkwardly walk across a field in full sight of the audience and then position themselves outside the fence surrounding the house, as if they have just emerged.

From the beginning, the performance is haunted by this divide, and thus by plural marriage, the doctrine at its core. The performative space of the Mansion House and its environs therefore communicates both the expected, easily digested history plied by both the Community of Christ and the LDS churches—that Joseph and Emma were fiercely devoted to one another—while simultaneously revealing the more complicated history (and present) of the denominational

split. The absence of any mention of the fundamental disagreement between Joseph and Emma and the ensuing splintering of the church actually transforms into a palpable presence: for most visitors, the pall of plural marriage hangs over the place of Nauvoo, its absence, paradoxically, offering evidence of its erasure.

In other performances in Nauvoo, the church's history of polygamy is presented only slightly more openly. It is most present in the tours given of sites associated with Brigham Young. While the sites and spaces associated with Joseph Smith are scrubbed clean of any mention of plural marriage by both denominations, Brigham Young's participation in the practice is not so easily obscured. Over the course of his life, Young married 56 women; indeed, he is associated more with polygamy than with anything other than leading the Mormon pioneers to the Salt Lake Valley. At his homes in Nauvoo, the issue of plural marriage is discussed matter-of-factly; missionary guides confirm that polygamy did happen, and emphasize how well Young cared for his wives and children.

What is entirely ignored in LDS tours of the town is how the women of the early church felt about the practice; although the house where the all-female "Relief Society" was founded is a popular site, no mention is made of what the women may have discussed about Smith's volatile new revelations. As Burnham quips, the sites of Relief Society meetings are heavily visited and photographed, despite the fact that the Society "was composed of members who were secretly wed to Joseph, much to the dismay of Emma, ... who used the meetings as a pulpit from which to attack the institution she opposed even on her deathbed."³⁴ Unfortunately, this erasure represents

³⁴ Burnham, 135.

an all-too-common silencing of dissenting voices within the officially performed history of the LDS church.

Polygamy remains an explosive issue in each of the Mormon sects. Many mainline Mormons are descended from early polygamous members; some fringe Mormon groups still practice plural marriage. When Brigham Young's contingent of believers moved west, they solidified their imagined community by creating a physically bounded one removed from the casual brutality of their previous existence. In this borderland, they were also able to behave as they wished, sustaining their existence through a frontier theocracy that established the center and periphery of a divinely appointed order. Primary in this order was the transgressive practice of polygamy, which had not only separated the Nauvoo Saints from their Illinois neighbors but also created lasting ruptures within the church itself.

Among Young's followers, however, the practice quickly became firmly entrenched, however, and by the time they founded Salt Lake City, many of those first pioneers were practicing this "celestial law." Roach claims "imagined communities perpetuate themselves through the transmission of their prohibitions and entitlements."³⁵ In the early Salt Lake community, polygamy functioned as one such prohibition and entitlement, as only certain members in good standing were allowed to practice it. In this case, however, the prohibition and entitlement created literal "bodies" of memory in the surplus of children that resulted from these unions: the practice of plural marriage not only rapidly expanded the ranks of the Utah church, but also created repositories of knowledge, memory, and performance within the bodies of the children. Many of these descendants of polygamist marriages return to Nauvoo each summer as

³⁵ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 55.

tourists, pilgrims, and spectators, and, as the whitewashed vignette “Letters of Joseph and Emma” proves, these mutated branches of the Mormon family tree remain problematic over one hundred and fifty years later, continually challenging the meaning of Nauvoo’s sacralizing performances and sacred spaces.

“Sacred space,” Chidester and Linenthal argue, “is inevitably contested [because] when space or place becomes sacred, spatially scarce resources are transformed into a surplus of signification.”³⁶ This remarkable arithmetic, the transformation of a limited resource into infinite possibilities for constructing meaning and memory, is reflected in the sacred space of Nauvoo. The clearest contestation comes between the LDS and Community of Christ churches, and their views of how polygamy (and, later, temple worship) shaped the church’s future and the meaning of Joseph’s City Beautiful. As cultural geographer William Norton explains:

From the LDS church perspective, Nauvoo is the city of Joseph for it was here that Smith fulfilled his religious mission, introducing many of the beliefs and practices of the current LDS church.... Of particular significance is the Nauvoo temple site and building. The C of C church view Nauvoo differently because it has a very different interpretation of the Nauvoo religious experience, rejecting many of the beliefs and practices introduced by Smith between 1839 and 1844. [Richard P.]

³⁶ Chidester and Linenthal, 18.

Howard...suggests that the [Community of Christ] sees Nauvoo as “a painful symbol of early Mormonism’s tragic metamorphosis.”³⁷

This current contestation reflects some of the divergent opinions people had of Smith during his lifetime, and the debates that continue to surround his prophetic performances. Historic Nauvoo is a pilgrimage site entirely because of Smith’s existence there. In essence, the site has gained meaning through the “spatialization of charisma,” a process whereby “the power of the living person is sedimented and preserved after his death in the power of place.”³⁸ For Mormon visitors, Nauvoo stands as a witness of Smith’s divinely authorized prophetic power, though the power to do what, exactly, remains in question.

The Prophet is Dead. Long Live the Prophet!

While the Mormon community was dealing with the increasing problems caused by the covert practice of plural marriage, Joseph introduced several other schismatic doctrines to the Nauvoo Saints, including secretive temple ceremonies and proxy baptisms for the dead.³⁹ Rumors of the practical implementation of these doctrines—particularly baptisms for the dead and polygamous marriage—began to strain the heretofore friendly relationships the Saints had

³⁷ William Norton, “Competing Identities and Contested Places: Mormons in Nauvoo and Voree,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 21.1 (2003): 108; and Richard P. Howard, “The Nauvoo Heritage of the Reorganized Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 50.

³⁸ John Eade and Michael Sallnow, Introduction to *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael Sallnow (London: Routledge, 1991), 8. For their concept of the “spatialization of charisma,” Eade and Sallnow draw on Max Weber.

³⁹ Temple ceremonies remain restricted even today: members must be in good standing in the church and obtain a physical “recommend” in order to attend. LDS believers trace legitimization for proxy baptisms for the dead back to verses in the New Testament, such as 1 Peter 4:6, which suggests that people who have died will be taught the gospel in the hereafter, and 1 Corinthians 15:29, which mentions the practice in passing and serves as the sole explicit mention of the practice in Christian tradition outside LDS doctrine and scripture.

with their neighbors in Illinois. Such rumors, combined with Smith's increasing power in the region (he even initiated an ill-advised presidential campaign) and the defection of some of Smith's closest confidants, led to an escalating chorus of opposing voices, including the establishment of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, a rival newspaper in Nauvoo written and published by Mormon dissidents. In its one and only issue, published on June 7, 1844, the *Expositor* revealed, in detail, Smith's practice of plural marriage, and called him "one of the blackest and basest scoundrels that has appeared upon the stage of human existence since the days of Nero, and Caligula."⁴⁰ Two days later, the Nauvoo City Council declared the *Expositor* a "public nuisance" and ordered its press destroyed immediately; the order was carried out that same day.⁴¹ While the destruction of the press was technically legal, it nevertheless further ignited a tense situation, and Smith was soon arrested on charges of inciting a riot.

Over the following weeks, tensions continued to rise; on June 18, Smith, having been released from prison without being formally charged with wrongdoing, declared martial law in Nauvoo and called out the Nauvoo Legion to protect the city from anti-Mormon mobs that were using the destruction of the *Expositor's* press as a rallying cry. Ultimately, these tensions culminated Smith's re-arrest and imprisonment in the small jail in Carthage, Illinois, near Nauvoo. On June 27th, an incensed mob disguised with blackened faces broke in to the jail, overpowered the jailer, and murdered both Joseph and Hyrum.⁴² During the melee, Smith and his

⁴⁰ Francis M. Higbee, "Citizens of Hancock County," *The Nauvoo Expositor* June 7, 1844, Issue 1, col. D. Gale Cengage 19th Century US Newspapers. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/673/828/184826950w16/purl=&dyn=sig!1?sw_aep=byuprovo.

⁴¹ B. H. Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (1900; repr., Provo UT: Maasai Publishing, Inc., 2001), 284.

⁴² The fact that many of Smith's assailants had disguised themselves by blackening their faces is certainly shocking in the context of our contemporary understanding of the blackface performance tradition. It seems unlikely, however, that there was a performative meaning to this gesture other than the attackers' desire to obscure their

jailed companions fired back at their assailants; as he was trying to escape by jumping out of a window, Smith was shot twice and cried “Oh Lord, My God” as he fell to the ground below.⁴³ Though there were some attempts to disfigure Smith’s body following the shooting, most of the mob dispersed quickly (fig. 3.6). Military and local police forces were put on alert, anticipating retaliation from the Mormon militia, but church members were too stunned by news of their prophet’s death to exact retribution and, though a handful of men were accused of the murders, no one was ever tried.

The LDS-owned Carthage Jail heritage site is located a thirty-minute drive southeast of Nauvoo. Today, the property includes a sculpture garden dedicated to Joseph Smith’s life, a newly constructed visitor’s center staffed by missionaries, and the jail itself, which has been restored to look like it did at the time of Smith’s death. One of the most photographed sculptures depicts Joseph and Hyrum looking stoically into the distance, forever witnesses of their violent fate (fig. 3.7). The visitor’s center offers a film about Smith’s life and role as prophet and founder of the religion and serves as the starting point for tours of the jail. The only way to visit the jail itself (which is, of course, the main draw) is to take a guided tour; as with the sites in Historic Nauvoo that are policed by entry requirements, this set-up allows the LDS church to at

identities. By the time of Smith’s death, blackface had become a commonplace in US performance (T.D. Rice, with his “Jump Jim Crow” song and dance, became famous in the early 1830s), although minstrelsy had yet to take firm hold of the national imagination (Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 211; and John Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult, and Imitation in American Popular Culture* [New York: Penguin Group, 2006], 67). Though we may perhaps read more into this performance—one of the primary disagreements early LDS members had with their neighbors in slaveholding Missouri was over slavery, and Smith was, later in life, an abolitionist—there is little in the historical record to tie this particular performance to specific types of racial impersonation.

⁴³ John Taylor, “The Murder,” *Times and Seasons* 5.13 (July 1844): 585. Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries. BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections. Accessed December 15, 2010. <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/8375>.

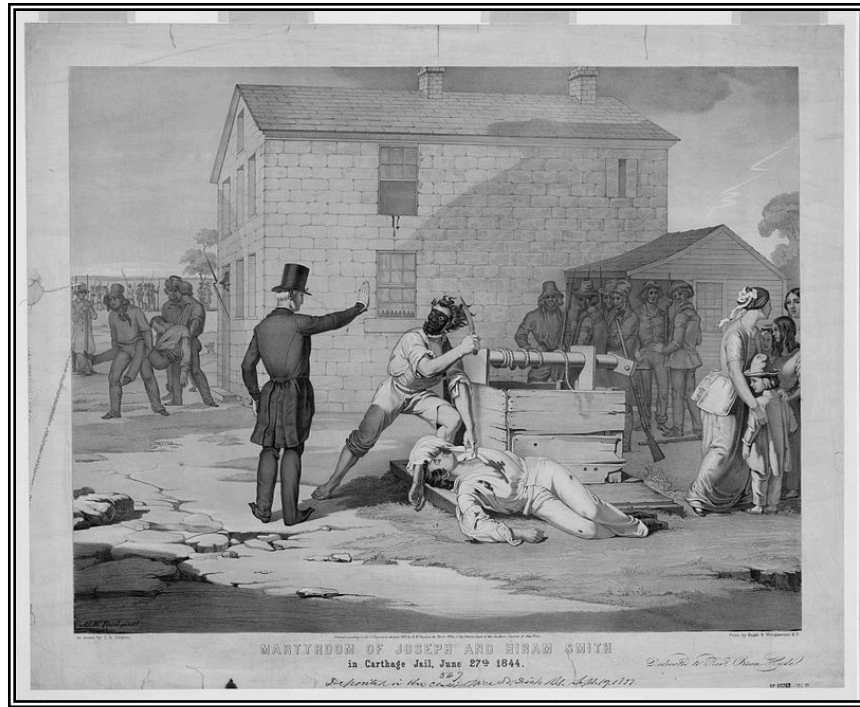


Figure 3.6: C.G. Crehen, *Martyrdom of Joseph and Hiram [sic] Smith in Carthage Jail, June 27th, 1844*. Lithograph from the painting by G.W. Fasel. N.Y.: Nagel and Weingaertner, c. 1851. Courtesy of Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

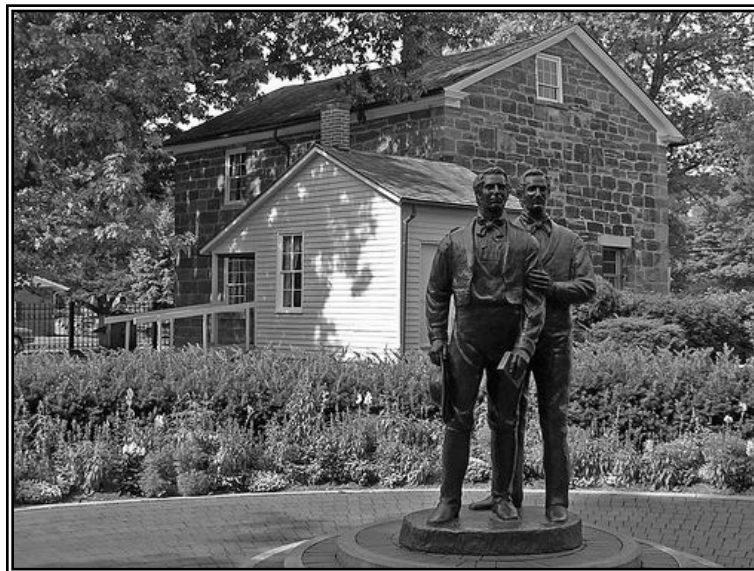


Figure 3.7: Memorial to Joseph and Hyrum Smith outside of Carthage Jail. Carthage, Illinois, March 22, 2006. *MormonWiki.com*. Photograph courtesy of Amaranth.

least partially control the narrative of imprisonment and murder that is communicated through the site.

Inside the jail, the history is presented simply and soberly: here is the kitchen where the jailer's family would have eaten with the prisoners, here is the cell in which the captives were kept for their own safety, here is the bedroom where the Smith brothers were killed. As in many living history museums, objects are used to set the scene and add authenticity to the experience; in the aforementioned spaces, a rough-hewn table and chairs, iron bars, and sawdust-stuffed beds act as material witnesses of the events that haunt the pilgrimage site. Entrances and exits are also emphasized. As an affective strategy, the missionary guides draw on a widespread fear of home invasion in the U.S. in their narrative of the martyrdom, explaining that the mob viciously broke through the door of the jail and burst into the small kitchen, where the jailer could have been sitting with his wife and young children.⁴⁴ Upstairs, in the bedroom where Joseph and Hyrum were shot, great attention is given to the door, which still bears a bullet hole from the attack, and the window, from which Joseph fell to his death. While visitors sit in the bedroom where the fighting took place, missionaries play an audio recording of John Taylor's account of the events (fig. 3.8).⁴⁵ The clean, Spartan surroundings coupled with the ghostly material and audio echoes of the event contribute to the LDS project of sacralizing this most important pilgrimage site.

The very soberness of surroundings in the jail creates a perfect *mise-en-scène* for a placemaking performance, creating a mood and establishing a paradigm for appropriate behavior

⁴⁴ He wasn't. Nevertheless, it is good for the story and an excellent way to encourage visitors to imagine for themselves the horror of that day.

⁴⁵ Taylor, who would later become president of the LDS church in Utah, was imprisoned with Joseph, Hyrum, and Willard Richards. Taylor was shot four times during the attack on the jail; of the four men imprisoned in Carthage Jail, Richards alone escaped without injury.

at this sacred site. Although this is a uniquely bounded and sacred space that draws pilgrims and tourists towards it with centripetal force, unlike some pilgrimage sites it is not a location that encourages outpourings of grief or expectations of miracles. Reflecting the austerity of the jail itself, a certain level of decorum seems to be expected of those who come to the site: reverence for those—especially Joseph Smith—who died here. This sacred site, like all such locations, “carries with it a whole range of rules and regulations regarding people’s behavior in relation to it, and implies a set of beliefs to do with the non-empirical world, often in relation to the spirits



Figure 3.8: Window and door with bullet hole – upper room at Carthage Jail. Carthage, Illinois, July 6, 2007. Photo courtesy of Lauren Barksdale.

of the ancestors, as well as more remote or powerful gods or spirits.”⁴⁶ Through the enforcement of sacralizing behaviors, the jail becomes a place that produces a certain kind of spectator/tourist, pushing the role of pilgrim on everyone who enters, regardless of their belief in Smith’s claims.

The effect of sacralization upon this space is never more evident than when visitors transgress the unspoken rules and regulations of behavior at the site. Some are only seemingly transgressive, as they are actually sanctioned by the missionary guides and bring a small amount of levity to the heaviness of Carthage’s history. The clearest example of such a faux transgression is families taking joke pictures of themselves “in jail” in the downstairs debtor’s cell. The guide takes the group into the cell and briefly explains its historical uses and that Joseph was held there for a short time before he was moved up to the criminals’ cell and then into the jailer’s bedroom. She then gives the group a few minutes to explore the tiny space and offers to take pictures of families behind the bars, replicating the popular carnival photographs that position subjects of the photo inside a false cell. Such performances seem to go against the sacred atmosphere being cultivated, but, in reality, they actually codify the spatial organization, allowing playfulness and profanation in the less sacred parts of the site and thus reifying the intense sanctification of the upstairs spaces. Although “every place has an excess of meaning beyond what can be seen or understood at any one time,” the spatial juxtaposition used by the LDS guides at Carthage Jail furthers the project of spatial sacralization, using the profane to highlight the sacred.

⁴⁶ David L. Carmichael, Jane Hubert, and Brian Reeves, Introduction to *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, ed. David L. Carmichael, Jane Hubert, Brian Reeves, and Audhild Schanche (London: Routledge, 1994), 3.

Other performances, however, present actual challenges to this sacralization, sometimes even revealing curators' attempts to manipulate the spatial, spiritual, and performed experiences of visitors. On one visit I made to Carthage Jail, I was placed in a large tour group that included a family of six: two haggard-looking parents, two inattentive and slouchy teenagers, and two rambunctious young boys, perhaps eight and ten years old.⁴⁷ The family was LDS, as evidenced by the youngest boy's t-shirt, which bore an image of a heroic figure from the Book of Mormon. Our entire group dutifully sat down to watch the Joseph Smith film and then followed the guide out of the visitors' center and into the jail itself. While the parents and teenagers moved zombie-like through each space, the young boys became more and more emboldened in their horseplay. In the debtor's cell, they climbed the bars and jumped on and off the benches while the elderly missionary attempted to talk over them. The boys leapt into other families' jail pictures, pulling faces and generally performing "bad behavior" for the cameras of other members of the group. Unsurprisingly, there were a number of visitors who loudly condemned the childrens' behavior, trying—in a passive aggressive way—to get the parents to intervene.

As the group proceeded upstairs, the boys became even more animated. They played with the bullet hole in the door (which had been presented as a holy relic) and scoffed at the shadow of Hyrum Smith's bloodstains on the floorboards. As John Taylor's voice echoed through the room, they sat on a bench together, needling and nudging with one another. Finally, the presentation was over, and group members were left to spend personal, quiet time in the room—the guide suggested that this was a great opportunity to "feel" the sacredness of this place and allow for a spiritual witness of the truth of Joseph Smith's church. The boys let loose, running

⁴⁷ Visit to Carthage Jail, Carthage, IL, July 10, 2009.

around the space. One of them ran over to the window from which Joseph fell and shouted at his brother, “I’m Joseph Smith! Shoot me!” The brother obliged, fashioning his thumb and forefinger into the shape of a revolver and performed the assassination. “Joseph” pretended to fall through the window, grunting and shouting his demise.

As much as the missionary guide attempted to control the space and police the performances allowed in this sacred space, she was unable to contain the boys’ behaviors; as a result, all the visitors in this particular group encountered the space very differently from how the curators may have wished. Repeatedly, the boys, who seemingly had no realization of the havoc they were wreaking upon the spatial and performative narrative of this site, intruded upon the constructed sacredness of the space, revealing the mechanisms of sacralization: production of sanctified space, regulation of visitor performance, and command of historical narrative. Like Bert States’ dog, the boys pulled back the veil of performative belief, and remained “blissfully above, or beneath, the business of playing.”⁴⁸ While most of the adult visitors were aware the behavioral expectations placed upon them at this most sacred of Mormon sites, the boys either didn’t know or didn’t care about such expectations and thus refused to comply with them. It is impossible to know the intentionality behind the boys’ behavior, but, for some visitors, it may have opened up the possibility for tactical resistance to the performative space and narratives created and advanced by the LDS curators of the Carthage Jail site.

Nauvoo and Carthage would certainly have been considered sacred places in the Mormon worldview, even without Joseph’s death: Nauvoo was the first theocratic city members of the young religion successfully created, the setting of some of the church’s most important modern-

⁴⁸ Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 34.

day revelations, and the location of the Saints' second temple; Carthage would still have been the location where Smith received spiritual revelation and comfort.⁴⁹ Smith's death, however, certainly served to further consecrate the site and imbue the space with meaning. It also served to turn Nauvoo into an openly "contested" sacred place, a site where the various Mormon sects play out their differences through spatial negotiation, competing for a role in the construction of the site's narrative.⁵⁰

Smith's death set off a succession crisis that resonates throughout Nauvoo's sacred space today, influencing how, exactly, the space is able to perform for visitors. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach examines how communities deal with losses through surrogation, a process that "does not begin or end, but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric."⁵¹ The young Mormon community was dealt an almost paralyzing blow when Smith was shot. In contemporary accounts of the ensuing succession crisis, it is often remarked that, had Hyrum lived, he would have been Smith's automatic successor, but since he was murdered along with Joseph, the selection of the next leader of the church was left entirely up to the congregation of saints. This crisis was complicated by the fact that in the years immediately prior to his death, Smith had spoken of at least eight different possible methods of

⁴⁹ Had he not been murdered, it's not much of a leap to assume that Smith's time in Carthage jail would be viewed by believers in the Mormon faith as a humbling, character-building, and sanctifying ordeal—much as his months in another prison, Liberty Jail in Missouri, are seen. In Liberty Jail, Smith received a revelation that, even in the sorrow of unjust imprisonment, he was not lower than Jesus Christ. The revelation, which is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants, 122:7-8, states: "All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?"

⁵⁰ For a more complete discussion of sacred space as "contested," see Edward T. Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

⁵¹ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 2.

succession.⁵² Clearly, this is a prime example of Roach’s concept of surrogation: the social fabric had a gaping vacancy, a hole that presented Mormons with the opportunity to shape their own leadership by determining who would fill the empty space.

In a further explanation of his concept of surrogation, Roach stresses a society’s need to emphasize the relative stasis of the one over the plurality of the many. Roach’s example of this is the tradition of the king’s two bodies, typified by the utterance “The king is dead. Long live the king.” Just as when the royal mantle was passed on to a successor, a similar emphasis on continuity—one that recognized and mourned the passing of Smith while simultaneously reifying the new claimant’s position—was necessary to smooth the transition from one prophet to the next. The practices and performances that help ease such a transition, Roach suggests, “answer the need to symbolize the inviolate continuity of the body politic,” something they do “by dramatizing a duality, a core of preternatural durability invested within a shell of human vulnerability.”⁵³

In the case of the Mormon prophetic succession, Brigham Young, who subsequently became the next president of the LDS church, performed this mortal/immortal duality by actually appearing as Joseph Smith. In what has been passed down through generations of Mormon folklore as a modern-day miracle, persons in attendance at the meeting that decided the fate of the church’s leadership claimed to have seen a “transfiguration” of Brigham Young into Joseph Smith, a divine manifestation of God’s will that Young succeed Smith as prophet and president. Among the witnesses was Benjamin F. Johnson, whose account of the day’s events records his

⁵² D. Michael Quinn, “The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844,” *BYU Studies* 16.2 (1976): 1. In this article, Quinn outlines the possible methods of succession laid out by Joseph Smith and addresses question of how prophetic authority was legitimized in the fledgling church.

⁵³ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 38.

wonder: “But as soon as he spoke I jumped upon my feet, for in every possible degree it was Joseph's voice, and his person, in look, attitude, dress and appearance; [it] was Joseph himself, personified; and I knew in a moment the spirit and mantle of Joseph was upon him.”⁵⁴ Johnson’s use of the word “personified” anchors this experience in embodiment and performance. Johnson was not the only witness of this miracle; a 2005 article identifies 121 such documented experiences.⁵⁵ Importantly, among those who received this “vision” of personification were George Q. Cannon, who would later become an apostle, and Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church.

The original veracity of these accounts is, of course, up for debate, and many of them were committed to paper only long after the actual occurrence. Reid L. Harper argues that the idea of the “mantle of Joseph” passing on to Brigham Young began as a metaphor relating to Elijah, and only through the retelling of the tale and the later codification of authority under Young did it start to take on an element of performative divinity.⁵⁶ Memory is a tricky thing, after all; like performance, it is a continued reiteration in which any two retellings or re-rememberings can never be exactly the same. Slippage in the relation of memory can in turn allow for the creation of narratives of origin that are endowed with mystery and divine promise, remembered and relayed by “witnesses” of the miracle. As the church became more solidly established, there arose a need for individual members to reaffirm their belief in the deific purpose behind the succession of the prophet, and the stories changed from a mere agreement to

⁵⁴ Benjamin Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1947), 103-4.

⁵⁵ Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, “The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Smith Passes to Brother Brigham: One Hundred Twenty-one Testimonies of a Collective Spiritual Witness” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 374-480.

⁵⁶ Reid L. Harper, “The Mantle of Joseph: Creation of a Mormon Miracle,” *Journal of Mormon History* 22.2 (Fall 1996): 35.

pass a metaphorical mantle on to a new prophet into a literal transfiguration of the person of Brigham Young into Joseph Smith: a reassurance that this was, indeed, the divinely endorsed choice. Though Nauvoo was already a sacred space, cultivated by the LDS church and the site of a temple, this performance of surrogation, the passing of the mantle of the prophet and the ensuing miracle, assures its place in the Mormon imaginary consciousness as a space uniquely touched by the divine.

Smith's death and Young's subsequent assumption of the prophetic mantle and presidency of the LDS church have marked Nauvoo as a site of pilgrimage: a place of death and of origin. While Smith remains firmly settled as the founder of the faith, the contemporary LDS church finds much of its defining history in Young's journey across the plains and establishment of Salt Lake City as the heart and home of the church. Young's (mostly) successful surrogate performance gave weight and permanence to the fledgling church, and the new president's autocratic and isolated leadership would begin to solidify the contested doctrinal tenets espoused by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. One of those principles in particular, that of temple sealings, would come to greatly influence the twentieth-century church, leading to an increased attention to the religion's history and the experiences of spiritual ancestors. A distinct manifestation of this attention has been the increase in pilgrimage to the church's sites of origin, such as Nauvoo.

Pilgrimage, Performance, and Ritual

Each summer, over 800 members of the LDS church arrange to take leave of their jobs, church responsibilities, and homes and travel, often by car or van, to Nauvoo for two weeks to volunteer their services as performers in the church's annual pageant, titled "Nauvoo Pageant –

A Tribute to Joseph Smith” (fig. 3.9).⁵⁷ Often, these “family cast” volunteers have little experience as actors and few have aspirations to become more engaged in the theatre. For these actors, the performances are not about the theatrical product; rather, the journeys and performances are part pilgrimage and part evangelizing mission—often arduous and expensive experiences that participants hope will result in both personal spiritual enrichment and the conversion of those for whom they perform.⁵⁸

The pilgrimage nature of family cast participation in the pageant is further emphasized by the fact that the church provides no financial help to families that decide to join; indeed, the financial hardship assumed by participants is often viewed as part of the sacrificial nature of their performance-based pilgrimage. Many families pitch tents at nearby campgrounds or station an RV at the local park because they cannot afford to lodge their families in more sophisticated structures for the two-week period of rehearsal and performance.⁵⁹ This renunciation of material comfort is sometimes framed as a way to get even closer to the sacred history that cast members are performing; by echoing the less-than-ideal living situations of early inhabitants of Nauvoo, these pilgrims “effigy the pioneer past.”⁶⁰

This pilgrimage, though unique in its focus on the pageant and the importance of performing the religion’s history, echoes many of the structural elements of more traditional

⁵⁷ Walstad, interview.

⁵⁸ The official website for the pageant promises that families who participate “will have many opportunities to share the gospel message with audience members and other visitors in Nauvoo while hosting the Frontier Country Fair celebration and performing in the pageant. Families and individuals will also have opportunities to strengthen their testimonies of the gospel through rehearsal and performance.” “Nauvoo Pageant: Family Cast,” Nauvoo Pageant, accessed April 8, 2011, <http://www.nauvoopageant.org/nauvoo-family-cast/>.

⁵⁹ Walstad, interview.

⁶⁰ In this passage, Megan Sanborn Jones builds on Roach’s idea of effigy from *Cities of the Dead*. Megan Sanborn Jones, “(Re)living the Pioneer Past: Mormon Youth Handcart Trek Re-enactments,” *Theatre Topics* 16.2 (2006): 114.



Figure 3.9: Family cast members, “Nauvoo Pageant – A Tribute to Joseph Smith.” Photograph by Blaine Hofeling. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

religious journeys. Families abandon worldly responsibilities, forego other vacation possibilities, undertake long and often difficult passages to get to the site, endure often unpleasant working and living conditions, and generally subsume impulses for individual comfort to the demands of the pilgrimage. Importantly, however, such sacrifices are not without reward; family cast pilgrims, like almost all other pilgrims, anticipate spiritual fulfillment as the repayment for their investment of time and material comfort. As Victor and Edith Turner argue, the casting off of the everyday world allows a pilgrim to “divest...himself of the mundane concomitants of religion—which become entangled with its practice in the local situation—to confront, in a special ‘far’

milieu, the basic elements and structures of his faith in their unshielded, virgin radiance.”⁶¹ For family cast members of “Nauvoo Pageant,” their ritual performances of pilgrimage allows them to confront the basic elements of their faith, identifying with their pioneer past by bodying it forth on the pageant stage.

Religion scholar Douglas J. Davies suggests that an understanding of pilgrimage is necessary to comprehend LDS culture, since the entire religion is founded upon the notion of movement: in particular, the inter- and transnational migration that echoed the biblical Exodus and ended in Salt Lake City, the LDS Zion. LDS concepts of faith, Davies contends, are “grounded in movement, and in a corresponding belief that God will reward the venture.”⁶² This pattern of faith-based travel and its corollary of spiritual compensation is found throughout LDS scripture and history, and modern-day performances of pilgrimage are extensions of this doctrinal motif.

Many family cast members see their travel to Nauvoo and participation in the pageant in terms of missionary service, a concept that plays an enormous role in LDS doctrine, culture, and identity construction.⁶³ Within the church, a large percentage of young men, and a smaller number of young women, serve two-year missions, preaching the LDS gospel and providing service to nonmembers, often in locations far from their homes. Davies ties such missions to pilgrimage motif that inhabits LDS culture and doctrine, suggesting that missions perform the same basic functions of increasing faith through travel and ritual separation. “Testimonies,”

⁶¹ Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 15.

⁶² Douglas Davies, “Pilgrimage in Mormon Culture,” *Social Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Makhan Jha (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1991), 322.

⁶³ Adele Parker, interview with the author, Salt Lake City, UT, January 21, 2011.

Davies offers, “are either gained or strengthened during the missionary period. This reinforces the place of movement and faith within the total symbolic scheme of Mormonism. For it is in having actually taken a physical journey that missionaries progress with their faith.”⁶⁴ Family cast participation, which includes both journey and performance, likewise instigates a progression of faith.

This progression of faith occurs through a synthesis of place and performance; the amalgamation of embodiment and emplacement brings the past into the present and transforms the religion’s history into members’ personal memories. The magical transformation of history into memory through effigied performances ritualizes the pilgrimage. In Nauvoo, there is a give and take between performance and sacred space: the fact that this space is sacred is what anchors the performances featured here; the performances, in turn, serve to further sacralize the space, creating a ritual place.

Chidester and Linenthal, in an analysis of how sacred space is produced, emphasize the role of ritual in the continuous work of negotiating such space, suggesting that “sacred space is ritual space, a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances.” They continue, “Ritualization is perhaps best understood as a particular type of embodied, spatial practice.”⁶⁵ For them, then, ritual performance is what ultimately creates and maintains sacred spaces; there is nothing, they claim, inherently holy about sacred spaces. Because ritual produces sacred space, it is performative; this formulation leads to the axiom that ritual space is performative space—the space itself actually *does* something, it acts upon those who inhabit it.

⁶⁴ Davies, “Pilgrimage in Mormon Culture,” 317.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

Pilgrimage space, then, is ritual space, which is to say it is performative space. Nauvoo simultaneously performs the roles of heritage, pilgrimage, and ritual site, and the meaning produced by the performances staged there is thus overcoded by the influence of these three types of representational space.⁶⁶ Each of these spatial types function as performative, both embodying and bodying forth their historical and religious meaning, performing for visitors. The contemporary city of Nauvoo performs its history through rather standard living history performances of period games and chores alongside the more extravagant performances of the pageant and the historical vignettes; it also performs its history by being “the very place” where Smith and his followers gathered, sermonized, and lived together.

Meanwhile, the city performs its sacredness through the discrete, planned performances of the pageant and the missionary presentations as well as spontaneous performances of devotion by pilgrims who come to honor ancestors and to encounter the crude and exhilarating nascency of some of the mainline LDS Church’s most fervently held beliefs. Again, the space of sacredness is also produced by the fact that simply being in the place of Nauvoo ought to create some kind of inter-generational and trans-dimensional connection with either ancestors or a deity. In this way, the sacred pilgrimage and devotional space of Nauvoo spills over into ritual, producing yet another type of performative space.

As it does in most religions, ritual plays a primary function in the LDS faith, and ritual *space* in particular is carefully carved out and zealously guarded. Most notably, LDS temples

⁶⁶ Lefebvre, 39. Lefebvre argues that there are, at any given site, an infinite number of representational spaces that interact and, through this interaction, produce the whole space of the site. Of course, because it is impossible to track even a fraction of the possible representational spaces that determine the experience of a site, it is likewise impossible to ever create a comprehensive analysis of even the most distinct, bounded site. There are literally as many spaces as there are people who experience them.

function as the most sacred places on earth, and the site where important ritual ceremonies are performed by worthy members of the church.⁶⁷ Nauvoo is unique among the sites of early church pilgrimage for many reasons; one of the most compelling is that this is where the Saints began widely practicing the rituals that would codify into contemporary temple practices.

The ritual ceremonies performed in LDS temples (proxy ordinances of baptism, endowment, and marriage performed for ancestors and others who are dead) are sacred and represent a real connection between this earthly world and the afterlife. These ceremonies allow families to be eternally linked to one another, forming a genealogical chain theoretically stretching back to the Garden of Eden. Thus, it is through ritual, proxy performances in a sacred space that these vital connections are made. Such performances transform both time and space, turning linear time into what Tracy Davis has called “performative time,” which “allows for nonlinearity, or nonseriality as a factor in perception as well as the teleology of time’s asynchronicity, polychronicity, and anachronism, overturning a straightforward concept of temporal succession.”⁶⁸ The spatial function of the temple, therefore, is to complicate linear time and emphasize the eternal nature of the family bond—within the LDS temple, space becomes multivalent and polychronic. Ancestors and progeny are brought together and spatiality triumphs over temporality, everlasting life over eternal death.

⁶⁷ As with all religious rituals, there are gate-keeping processes that sacralize the place of the temple. Since the dedication of the first Nauvoo temple, “worthy” members may attend the LDS temple to perform “saving ordinances” or ritual ceremonies and instructional sessions. Much to the dismay of contemporary members, throughout most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the designation of worthiness was not extended to members of African descent, who were permitted to be baptized as members but not allowed to hold the priesthood or enter the temple. This policy was reversed by a 1978 decree that enabled all members, regardless of race or ethnicity, to receive the full benefits of membership, including attending the temple and participating in the rituals practiced therein.

⁶⁸ Tracy C. Davis, “Performative Time,” in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 149.

For family cast pilgrims, their performances embodying LDS history in the space of Nauvoo are likewise sacred and allow the performers to ritually communicate with and for the dead, reaching out across time and space to share their beliefs. Performance scholar Freddie Rokem suggests that embodying history on the stage positions the actor as “a witness of the historical event.”⁶⁹ The pilgrimage performances of family cast members, however, go even further than witnessing; because their actions are seen as sacred and ritualized, the performers become proxies for the people they are representing, in some small way replicating the eternal connections forged in LDS temples. In secular performance rituals akin to sacred temple ceremonies, volunteer actors in Nauvoo take upon them the names of their pioneer progenitors, and performance thus becomes a conduit for memorial practice, sacralizing the tourist space of Nauvoo.

Family cast members are not the only ones who take part in performances of pilgrimage in Nauvoo; they are joined by youth groups on month-long missionary trips, full-time missionaries who serve in the area for eighteen months to two years, and faithful believers who travel to the town in order to walk where Joseph Smith walked. Each of these visitors are pilgrims as much as tourists, and their journeys also serve to sacralize the space of the town. For LDS members in general, Sarah Bill Schott suggests, religious pilgrimage is

a ritual. They are listening to the recitation of history in a particular way by particular people. There are parts of that history that only insiders will understand and believe. As the members are learning their history, they respond to this ritual by being emotionally fortified and confident of their

⁶⁹ Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2000), 9.

place in the sacred history. They learn how their ancestors lived and how they can live that way as well.⁷⁰

Within the church, there is an emphasis on the pioneer narrative as a metaphorical example of how contemporary members ought to live, making a clear connection between past and present. A talk given by M. Russell Ballard, an apostle in the church, makes the analogy clear. “We will learn,” he counsels members, “as did our pioneer ancestors, that it is only in faith—real faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life... We are all bound together—19th and 20th century pioneers and more—in our great journey to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁷¹

The ritual reenactment of religious travel, beyond just pilgrimage to a holy site, thus becomes a way to fulfill the doctrinal demands to understand and integrate the past into members’ everyday lives by further binding the past and the present through performance. Alongside the evocation of the pioneer past as a model for contemporary living, pilgrimage to Nauvoo is ritualized through the retelling of familiar pioneer narratives. Indeed, because of the tropes repeated throughout the many tales of early pioneer fortitude, the stories relayed in Nauvoo are well known to members of the LDS church, even if the characters in them are not. All of the performances featured in Nauvoo, from living history presentations to the pageant and historical vignettes, rely upon this familiarity in order to ritualize the history being told.

⁷⁰ Sarah Bill Schott, “Pilgrims, Seekers and History Buffs: Identity Creation through Religious Tourism.” In *On the Road to Being There: Studies in Pilgrimage and Tourism in Late Modernity*, ed. William H. Swatos (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006), 312.

⁷¹ M. Russell Ballard, “You Have Nothing to Fear From the Journey,” *Ensign*, May 1997, accessed April 28, 2011, <http://lds.org/ensign/1997/05/you-have-nothing-to-fear-from-the-journey?lang=eng>.

As Schott argues, the ritual of pilgrimage depends on “the recitation of history in a particular way by particular people” and, in many ways, can only be understood by initiates. In the pageant, this emerges as the retelling of a conventional conversion story within Mormon lore: the antagonist who is won over by Joseph Smith, and who ultimately recognizes him as a prophet. The performance begins with a rollicking frontier family-style celebration (carrying over from the pre-performance, which invites spectators to try their hand at Nauvoo-era games and dances) depicting Joseph Smith as a beloved but grounded family man who enjoys a good leg wrestle. Although the pageant is populated with actual historical figures, the main plot revolves around a fictional family: Robert and Becky Laird, immigrants from Scotland (fig. 3.10). Becky was converted to the church in Scotland and, as the pageant begins, has arrived in Nauvoo with her husband, who is initially angry with Smith and the church largely because Laird’s infant son died during the ocean passage.

The celebratory mood of the pageant’s beginning is interrupted by Robert’s entrance. Echoing language that would be familiar to LDS spectators as the rhetoric of an unbeliever, Robert challenges Smith’s prophetic claims. “So then!” Robert bellows. “Where’s this great man of yours? This prophet called Joseph Smith?” When Smith identifies himself and tries to calm Robert, the grieving father refuses to be deterred:

ROBERT LAIRD: There’s 20 souls at least so wasted by fever and worn by
the journey I dinna know why they’re drawin’ breath, and 14 more
you’ll ne’er meet because their graves are at the bottom of the sea.
And one o’ those our ain wee bairn, m’ bonnie Jamie. He was barely

three when he wailed one last time for his mother and gave up the ghost. Dare you answer me, Mr. Smith, for the life of m' wee lad?

JOSEPH SMITH, *with tenderness*: Robert, I cannot answer for your son, but I can mourn with you. Some of our own children died as infants.

ROBERT LAIRD: Yet you can stand there and tell me your God accepts such terrible sacrifices from children he supposedly loves?



Figure 3.10: Robert, Becky, and Baby Laird. “The Nauvoo Pageant – A Tribute to Joseph Smith.”
Photograph by Blaine Hofeling. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

JOSEPH SMITH: Yes, I can. Because I know He also knows what it means to lose a son. (*After a moment, kindly.*) Come now Robert, and let us go find your Becky. And may I say just this? I make no demands for you to trust *me*, Robert, but if you will try, from this moment, to trust *God*, I give you my word—you will come into peace again.⁷²

Smith later invites Robert to stay with him and Emma, and, for those familiar with conversion tropes in religious narrative, there can be no doubt that Robert will eventually be converted.

Laird's story is intertwined with the history of the Mormons in Nauvoo; he is slowly converted through his association with the Saints and, in particular, through his work on the temple (he is a glazier). As he changes his mind about Smith and the Mormon faith, his language shifts from a familiar combative stance and begins to embody an even more common mood from the LDS pioneer trope: one of humility and conversion.

ROBERT LAIRD: Your promise *is* comin' to pass, Brother Joseph.

JOSEPH SMITH: My promise?

ROBERT LAIRD: That we'd find peace. I never though I could feel better again after Jamie died. It was a wound in me I thought would never heal.

JOSEPH SMITH: I remember.

ROBERT LAIRD: I suppose you do. And then I heard you and others talkin' about priesthood, and about temples, and families bein' together

⁷² "Nauvoo Pageant—A Tribute to Joseph Smith," 2006 Production Version (unpublished play script courtesy of Raymond Robinson and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, July 11, 2006) 6, 8. Emphasis in the original.

forever, and I thought, well—that’s fine, but it doesn’t solve *my* problem. You see, forever is forever, but it’s not now, and doesn’t bring back my son.

(Music cue: Laird Conversion)

ROBERT LAIRD (*continued*): But as I’ve lived here in Nauvoo, I find myself changin’, healin’, almost against my own will. I’ve tried to hold on to m’grief, but somethin’s different. I feel something. I canna quite explain it. I dunna exactly wha’ it is. I feel a wee bit embarrassed and foolish about it. But I know this: I like it. It tastes good. And I want it for myself and my family, always.⁷³

The music cue in the middle of Robert’s monologue reveals both the use of music to manipulate and the affective climax of the pioneer trope: here is where you, spectators, ought to feel the “spirit” of Robert’s conversion—the music makes this clear. LDS pilgrims attending the pageant will have been waiting for this moment and the ritual catharsis it allows them to feel. Although they know tragedy is on the horizon (in the next scene, Joseph and Hyrum are taken to Carthage; in subsequent scenes, the Saints are driven out of Nauvoo), these pilgrims can find solace in the performed ritual of hearing their sacred stories, reflected through the trope of a pioneer conversion.

Laird’s ritualized conversion, within the sacred space of Nauvoo, cannot be complete, however, until he goes through with the more formalized temple ritual of sealing, which will bind his family (dead son and all) to him forever. Nearly one and a half years after Smith’s

⁷³ Ibid., 51-2.

murder, the Saints began practicing the ritual of marriage sealings, in addition to others, in the recently completed Nauvoo temple (fig. 3.11); Laird and his family complete their conversion journey by participating in that rite at that temple. The pageant establishes the centrality of the temple spatially—the stage perfectly frames the actual temple behind it—and theatrically, by focusing not on the tragedy of the Saints’ being driven out of their homes mere months after



Figure 3.11: Daguerreotype of the original Nauvoo temple, c1847. By Louis R. Chaffin. Original located the collection of the Cedar City Chapter of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Cedar City, Utah.

completing the structure but rather on the promises of the ritual ceremonies performed inside the temple, as the Lairds's last scene demonstrates:

ROBERT LAIRD: That temple is the highlands of heaven. Did you know
 what you were doin' then, when you said yes to them missionaries and
 let 'em sleep in m' great-grandmother's very best quilt?

BECKY LAIRD: I didn't, but perhaps she did!⁷⁴

The pageant reaffirms the importance of the temple in Nauvoo, the physical and ritual manifestation of Joseph Smith's final teachings and the centerpiece of worship in the contemporary LDS church.

Solidifying Nauvoo as a pilgrimage destination, in 2002 a precise replica of the Nauvoo temple was dedicated on the exact spot where the first one stood over 150 years ago (fig. 3.12). This bit of architectural ghosting—though not unique among living history museums, which often erect reconstructed buildings—becomes a sacred ritual space in ways that other reconstructions cannot. Ultimately, for LDS members, it is not the absent structure of the temple that made Nauvoo incomplete, but rather the absence of the temple ceremonies that had been performed there. Now, this fully functional temple welcomes thousands of guests per year, replicating the rituals that first made this space atop the hill sacred and recreating the past through performance. Members who attend the temple envision the temporal boundaries of the outside world slipping away, and understand that their pilgrimage is rewarded by the opportunity to visit this holy place.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 67-8.



Figure 3.12: The Nauvoo temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nauvoo, Illinois, July 12, 2009. Photograph by Lindsay Adamson Livingston.

“Ritual,” Catherine Bell suggests, can be “described as an encounter between imagination and memory translated into the physical acts of the body.”⁷⁵ Following Bell’s formulation, for contemporary LDS pilgrims, travel to Nauvoo, and especially to the rebuilt temple, is itself a ritual, a breeching of the chasm that separates them from their spiritual ancestors. This liminal place emerges as an actual embodiment of ritual, since, according to Clifford Geertz, “In a ritual the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic

⁷⁵ Catherine Bell, “Ritual,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 409.

forms, turns out to be the same world.”⁷⁶ Reminded by their leaders and the repetition of familiar, ritualized narratives, LDS pilgrims translate their own Latter-day experiences into a metaphorical pioneer journey, inspired by the constructed space of Historical Nauvoo, which stands in as a ghostly echo of the sacred, ritual space of the temple, engendered by the complicated dance of sacralized space and ritualized performances. The ritual of pilgrimage, and the performances of devotion that accompany it, bring the imagined world of faith and the physical world of action into conversation, reifying the spiritual links between past and present believers.

Genealogies of Performance, Performed Genealogies

The methodological framework of genealogy has, for many theorists and scholars, replaced that of historiography and narrative continuity as a preferred approach to gathering and analyzing historical data. Michel Foucault, in his seminal essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” constructs a particular definition of genealogy, one that is appealing to contemporary scholars because of its repudiation of master narratives. Drawing on Nietzsche’s concept of *Ursprung*, or the “pursuit of the origin,” Foucault argues that such a pursuit represents an

attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities... [T]his search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to ‘that which was already there,’ the image of a primordial truth.... However, if the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there

⁷⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 112.

is ‘something altogether different’ behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in piecemeal fashion from alien forms.⁷⁷

The genealogist, then, is placed in opposition to the historian, who looks at events and sees individual cogs in a huge master machine of historical narrative—the “timeless and essential secret” that explains all of human history. Religious narrative, like historical narrative, is an attempt to find that master narrative, with the added dose of metaphysics that extends the carefully constructed story beyond the bounds even of human history, beginning and ending in a non-earthly realm.

Although this shift from scrupulously structured historical and religious narratives to more haphazard “genealogical” investigations has, in some cases, seemed to represent the demise of master-narratives, sociologist Paul Connerton argues that such stories have not disappeared, merely gone into hiding. “The fact that we no longer believe in the great ‘subjects’ of history,” he claims, “means, not the disappearance of these great master-narratives, but rather their continuing unconscious effectiveness as ways of thinking about and acting in our contemporary situation: their persistence, in other words, as unconscious collective memories.”⁷⁸ While the genealogist may abandon a progressive narrative, Connerton suggests, she nevertheless continues to look for patterns that will expose the meaning lurking underneath the surface, searching for how these “things” are fabricated.

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 142.

⁷⁸ Connerton, 1.

For both Foucault and Connerton, however, genealogical research must ultimately concern itself with the body as a locus of memory, an idea that had long been ignored within historical writing. “The body is the inscribed surface of events,” Foucault posits. “Genealogy,” he continues, “is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history.”⁷⁹ One of the ways genealogy can expose such a body, along with “history’s destruction of the body,” is by uncovering the bodily movements that make up a culture’s performance genealogy, what Connerton refers to as “incorporating practices,” and Nora calls “true memory.”⁸⁰ This kind of genealogy, Roach argues, is “an intricate unraveling of the putative seamlessness of origins.”⁸¹

The LDS idea of genealogy, however, is simultaneously more traditional and more radical. For members of the LDS church, genealogy *is* a search for origins, or, rather, a search for the familial, narrative connections between the past and the present. Within the church’s worldview, genealogical research represents an opportunity to trace a clear, coherent line of genetic, doctrinal, and cultural descent from the beginning of history (as laid out in the Bible) to the present, connecting every person who has ever lived on earth through proxy performances of religious ordinances. In short, it is a project of narrative completion and implies the possibility of an eternal whole within which all memory, history, and truth can be contained and defined. It is an undertaking that will require an eternity to complete, a fact that hardly concerns practicing members, who believe that at least part of the afterlife will be dedicated to finishing this work.

⁷⁹ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 148.

⁸⁰ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 148; Connerton, 72; and Nora, 13. For further discussion of genealogies of performance, see Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 25-30.

⁸¹ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 30.

The tension that plays out between these two seemingly opposed definitions of genealogy, one which relies on memory as carried in the body and one which focuses on ferreting out minute histories from the archive, characterize Nauvoo's postmemorial performative space. Visitors who believe in or are familiar with the LDS church's genealogical project will recognize the emphasis placed on connecting with the dead, redeeming them through proxy performances—in this case, haunted memorial performances that spiritually and imaginatively link the town's contemporary visitors with its past inhabitants. Meanwhile, those who are looking for performance genealogies will perceive the informal memorial performances that, not coincidentally, also serve to link contemporary LDS visitors with their genealogical and spiritual ancestors.

Compellingly, the two projects of genealogies of performance and LDS familial genealogy are not the binaries they may at first seem. In spite of its claims for a Platonic narrative completion and wholeness, the LDS genealogical project bears within it the seeds of its own deconstruction: since this work will take an eternity to complete, it is, in essence, impossible to finish. Indeed, the undertaking is so vast yet so minute as to become almost incomprehensible, and requires a belief in the ability of performance to alter history—the performance of religious ceremonies links people together, replacing the need for putative genealogical records. Performance, within this view, supersedes archival material. Likewise, the cultural practices of LDS members that are being transmitted through performance in Nauvoo can be broken apart, revealed to be constructions with no timeless essence, regardless of the inherent implications of “normality” associated with such performances.

The clearest material representation of genealogy's centrality in LDS doctrine and practice is the Granite Mountain Records Vault, a nuclear bomb proof repository of genealogical and ceremonial records located outside of Salt Lake City. The vault contains "the most voluminous genealogical archives in the world"—what journalist Alex Shoumatoff calls "The Mountain of Names."⁸² Both the vault and the Society are manifestations of the church's mission to "redeem the dead," the process of which LDS performance scholar Megan Sanborn Jones explains thus:

For Mormons, this mission is accomplished through a variety of means: maintenance of personal journals, extensive genealogical research, a curriculum that focus on church history, and performance events and re-enactments that teach about LDS heritage. Even more integral to this mission is the practice of providing church ordinances, such as baptism or marriage, for ancestors who have passed on through special proxy ceremonies performed in LDS temples. For Mormons, identifying with the past is not just an educational enterprise, but a doctrinal imperative.⁸³

Heritage tourism and religious pilgrimage are increasingly numbered among the ways members can participate in the "doctrinal imperative" of remembering and identifying with the past and are often viewed as ways to erase the spatial and temporal boundaries that separate members from their spiritual ancestors, enabling participants to connect with the past in a tangible way.

⁸² Alex Shoumatoff, "The Mountain of Names," *The New Yorker*, May 13, 1985, 51, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/1985/05/13/1985_05_13_051_TNY_CARDS_000341255.

⁸³ Jones, 113.

In its administration of historical Nauvoo, the LDS church emphasizes the spatial parallels between the heritage site and the temple, positioning each as a place that can break down temporal boundaries and reveal a coterminous spatiality with the past and the present. In Nauvoo, the promises of the temple—spatially-negotiated and atemporal connections with ancestors—are further embodied through performance and role-play. In all of the official LDS performances, which range from living history museum-type interpretations of historical tasks to the professionally produced pageant, the importance of a sacred and historically marked space is emphasized. In *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson argues that all theatre is haunted and emphasizes the importance of repetition to “the means of performance, not only the actors but all the accoutrements of theatre, the literal ‘things’ that are ‘appearing again tonight at the performance.’”⁸⁴ In the case of sacred/tourist performances in Nauvoo, the literal things appearing again include the space itself, the temple, and the people who are standing in or witnessing for those ancestors who have died.⁸⁵

This haunting of Nauvoo is made manifest through performance in three distinct ways—living history activities, the pageant, and historical vignettes—each of which emphasizes the importance of atemporal spatial experiences. The living history activities of first- and second-person interpretation are featured year-round, while the pageant and the historical vignettes can only be witnessed and participated in during July. Each of these performances, joined with the informal tourist performances in which visitors engage both perform genealogy in the LDS sense

⁸⁴ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 7.

⁸⁵ Rokem, 9.

of redeeming the dead and reveal the underlying performance genealogies that give meaning to the haunted spaces, things, and people who appear here again tonight.

First-person interpretation, which is found at many historical tourist sites, features staff members dressed in period costumes demonstrating daily tasks from the era represented by the living history museum. In Nauvoo, this translates into volunteer missionaries dressed in mid-nineteenth-century garb demonstrating period crafts and activities for visitors while explaining the religious and historical significance of their particular location. In some portions of the district, tourists are invited to actually participate in these chores and games, becoming, as Scott Magelssen explains, “part of the past environment...instead of merely visiting it.”⁸⁶ As Magelssen has demonstrated, second-person interpretation allows for compelling, if complicated, encounters with the past. “Living bodies in the present,” he suggests,

promise a more “real” experience of the past than what visitors would get from viewing a collection of historic objects. What this means is that the body becomes a site of knowledge production on an equal footing with—or, in the case of living museums, even more powerful than—the book or the archive. At the same time, the living history body occupies a fuzzy discursive terrain between fictive performance and legitimate history.⁸⁷

LDS curators of the historical sites in Nauvoo are hoping that this “real” engagement with the past will lead not only to a more powerful historical encounter but also a more powerful spiritual encounter. After all, these are not paid staff or history buffs who are presenting their first-person

⁸⁶ Scott Magelssen, “‘This is a Drama. You are Characters’: The Tourist as Fugitive Slave in Connor Prairie’s ‘Follow the North Star,’” *Theatre Topics* 16.1 (March 2006): 19.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

interpretation and guiding visitors' second-person experiences; rather, they are volunteer evangelizers intent on converting non-members to the LDS gospel and members to a more immersive commitment to their own religion.⁸⁸

The pageant likewise represents an attempt to both tell history and encourage religious experience by situating both within the bodies of actors and spectators. Formerly titled "City of Joseph," in 2005 the pageant was completely rewritten by a committee overseen by the Presidency of the church and renamed "Nauvoo Pageant: A Tribute to the Prophet Joseph Smith."⁸⁹ According to Nauvoo residents and long-time pageant participants David and Diane Owen, this change was necessary to further the Mormon church's mission of evangelizing through the pageant. The previous pageant, they claimed, was "cheesy," while the new, improved version was more earnest and professional and would, they suggested, do a better job of telling Smith's story to non-members by appealing to "universal" desires to connect with the past.⁹⁰

The current pageant tells a somewhat sanitized version of the founding of Nauvoo (polygamy is noticeably absent—one suspects that this aspect of LDS history may not appeal to pageant attendees, whether or not they are Mormon) with an emphasis on the faith-building stories of immigrants from the United Kingdom who left family and home to build a life with the Saints on the swampy shores of the Mississippi. Populated by both a "core" cast of professional

⁸⁸ These first-person interpreters do not actively proselytize (i.e., they do not go out into the community in pairs and knock on doors), but they are encouraged to share their testimonies of the gospel. In fact, within these performances, the goal of creating a spiritual experience takes precedence over that of communicating accurate and in-depth history. See Jason Swensen, "Helping Visitors See, Hear, Feel the Spirit of Nauvoo," *Church News, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, May 18, 2002, <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41825/Helping-visitors-see-hear-feel-the-spirit-of-Nauvoo.html>.

⁸⁹ Kaye Rindlisbach, telephone conversation with author, December 13, 2010.

⁹⁰ David Owen and Diane Owen, interview with the author, Nauvoo, IL, July 7, 2009.

LDS actors and much larger, alternating volunteer family casts, the performance takes place on a picturesque meadow near the river and in the shadow of the rebuilt Mormon temple, which provides unobtrusive punctuation for the pageant's message of the importance of connecting with the past. In keeping with the LDS church's desire to limit commercial activity in the historical district (and the role of the pageant as a missionary tool), the pageant is presented free of cost.

In the pageant, the literalness of history and the possibility of genealogical connection through performance and spatial experience are brought to the fore, emphasizing the haunted nature of the temple, these grounds, and Nauvoo as a whole. The plot follows the plight of the Saints in draining and cultivating the malarial marshlands that became Nauvoo and focuses specifically on the trials and difficulties the early converts faced from anti-Mormon foes, bad business deals, and nature. The pageant does not linger on the negative, however, choosing rather to emphasize the cheerful service and stalwart conviction the early members shared. Attendees are invited to imagine themselves as inhabiting the same space as these early Saints, admonished that "you [spectators] are walking where we [early converts] walked" and that both current spectators and past inhabitants gazed on the same stars.⁹¹

This suggested haunting is taken even further toward the end of the pageant. Joseph and Hyrum Smith are led away to Carthage Jail; members and others familiar with LDS history know that this is their final journey.⁹² While the characters on stage mourn the death of their prophet

⁹¹ "Nauvoo Pageant – A Tribute to Joseph Smith," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Nauvoo, IL, July 12, 2009.

⁹² The 2010 version of the pageant does not mention "Carthage," instead saying Joseph and Hyrum "rode off to the north." According to Paul Walstad, a current member of the pageant's directing staff and former core cast member, this absence is a result of an attempt by church authorities to avoid creating or perpetuating any negative feelings between pageant spectators and residents of Carthage, Illinois, acknowledging the somewhat fragile relationship between the church and residents of Nauvoo's touristic "honeypot." Walstad, interview.

and leader, they nevertheless continue their quest to complete the temple that Smith began. Finally, in a climactically theatrical moment, the temple is completed—unfurled might be a better word, as, on stage, the temple is a remarkable hand-stitched fabric replica of the temple façade—and the performers sing a celebratory hosanna (figs. 3.13 and 3.14). The role of temples in the genealogical project of redeeming the dead is accentuated through ghosting when, after the temple is erected onstage, the “spirits” of dead Saints (including Joseph and Hyrum) ascend the stage to thank the citizens of Mormon Nauvoo for their diligence in completing the temple and continuing the work of linking families together through temple ceremonies. This scene likewise emphasizes the importance of performance in bringing about this genealogical salvation. The fabric temple then falls, revealing the actual reconstructed temple on the hill behind the stage (the building has remained dark throughout the performance).

As the “living” and ghosted Saints gather on the stage, a voiceover featuring Gordon B. Hinckley, former president of the church, echoes across the meadow, explaining the geographical and spiritual significance of the rebuilt temple:

Today, facing west, on the high bluff overlooking the city of Nauvoo, thence across the Mississippi, and over the plains of Iowa, there stands Joseph’s temple, a magnificent house of God. Here in the Salt Lake Valley, facing east to that beautiful temple in Nauvoo, stands Brigham’s temple, the Salt Lake Temple. They look toward one another as bookends between which there are volumes that speak of the suffering, the sorrow,



Figure 3.13: The Raising of the Nauvoo Temple. “Nauvoo Pageant—A Tribute to Joseph Smith.” No photo credit given.



Figure 3.14: Singing Hosanna. “Nauvoo Pageant – A Tribute to Joseph Smith.” Photograph by Blaine Hofeling. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

the sacrifice, even the deaths of thousands who made the long journey
from the Mississippi River to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.⁹³

The voiceover itself is terribly haunted; Hinckley led the church for nearly thirteen years and, in the summer that I attended the pageant, had died just one year earlier. His distinctive voice, ringing out over the pageant grounds, added yet another layer of ghostly urgency to the pageant’s message of redemption and remembrance.

⁹³ Gordon B. Hinckley, “O, That I Were an Angel and Could Have the Wish of My Heart,” *Ensign*, November 2002, accessed December 16, 2010, <http://lds.org/ensign/2002/11/o-that-i-were-an-angel-and-could-have-the-wish-of-mine-heart?lang=eng>.

The final *mise en scène* of the pageant brings the entire cast onstage, framed by the vast midwestern horizon and the immaculate temple (fig. 3.15). The connection between the pilgrimage space of the city and the genealogical space of temple salvation becomes plain in the final stage picture, and is echoed by some of the last dialogue in the play: “which is why when you’re here [...] we’re here also.”⁹⁴ The ultimate purpose of such performances, both temple rituals and summer pageants, is the reclamation and salvation of the dead—not a genealogy of performance, but rather a performed genealogy.

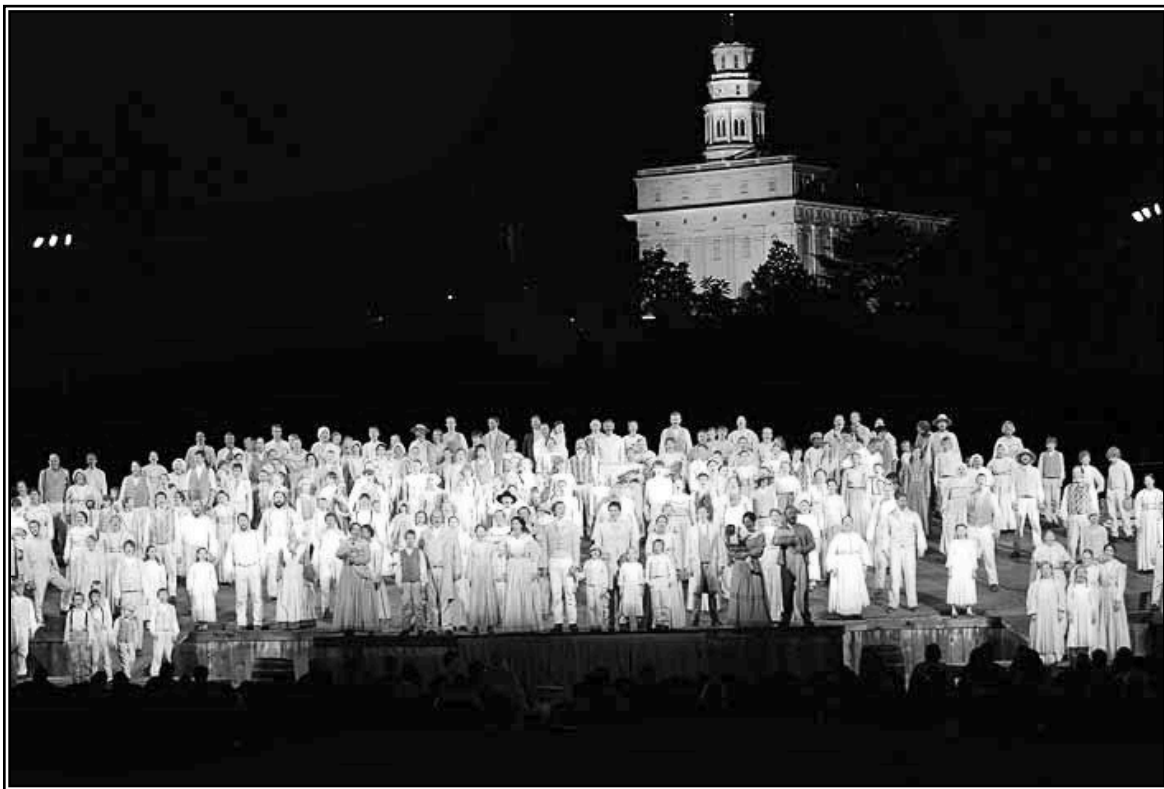


Figure 3.15: Final moment of “Nauvoo Pageant – A Tribute to Joseph Smith.” Notice the illuminated temple in the background. Photograph from the website *Beautiful Nauvoo, Illinois*. No photo credit given.

⁹⁴ “Nauvoo Pageant,” 2006 Production Version, 68.

According to promotional materials, the pageant “emphasizes the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and honors the sacrifice, faith and courage of the Saints who gave their all to build a city and a temple to their God.”⁹⁵ While the pageant is Nauvoo’s primary theatrical attraction and focuses on the enormous genealogical project in which the church is engaged, other performances during pageant month are quieter and more intimate. The “Nauvoo Remembered Historical Vignettes” feature actors from the pageant’s core cast and present living history “chats” with historical figures. Superficially, these vignettes make Nauvoo in July seem a little like Mormon Disneyland. It is, after all, a bit disconcerting to see Joseph and Emma Smith pausing in the streets to have their picture taken with children in pioneer garb. When one searches a little deeper, however, the performative functions of such reenactments become a bit more complicated.

In an analysis of historical narrative at living history museums, Magelssen suggests that putting the body back in history fundamentally alters the way it is made at tourist sites. “If written historiography makes a business out of seeking to write the absent body,” he argues, “living history infuses the reconstruction of the past with a surrogate body and proceeds to write its history upon both that surrogate body and the body of its spectator. In this manner, the body itself becomes the implicit contract of authenticity and authority at living history sites.”⁹⁶ The vignettes featured in Nauvoo are offered as light afternoon entertainment and “a chance to meet pageant cast members,” but two in particular expose alternate performance genealogies not found in the pageant and present uniquely embodied challenges to the authorized narratives of

⁹⁵ “Nauvoo Pageant – A Tribute to Joseph Smith,” Nauvoo Pageant, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.nauvoopageant.org/>.

⁹⁶ Magelssen, “This is a Drama,” 20.

Smith's life and Nauvoo's past that are promoted by the LDS church, implicating both actor and spectator in the construction of historical narrative, authenticity, and authority.

One of Smith's last sermons, given at his friend King Follett's funeral in April of 1844, concentrated on some of the most radical doctrines of the church, including the intelligence of man and the plurality of gods. Smith taught his followers that God did not create man but rather "organized" humans from already existing "intelligences" and that humans, though of lesser intelligence, are "co-equal" or co-eternal with God.⁹⁷ Ultimately, Smith taught, humans could become gods through righteousness and faithfulness. This doctrine had wide-reaching implications, not least of which was the corollary that, if men could become gods, God must have once been a man.

Unsurprisingly, this claim is seen as deeply heretical in traditional Christianity, which holds the divinity and uniqueness of Jesus Christ to be unassailable. In *The American Religion: The Emergence of a Post-Christian Nation*, Harold Bloom identifies this particular doctrine as representing an individuality uniquely associated with the United States, arguing, "nowhere is Joseph's genius so American as when he declares that God organized us and our world, but did not create either, since we are as early and original as he is."⁹⁸ Because God promises life is eternal, Smith reasons, that must mean there is no beginning. If there is no beginning, then there is no creation, only organization.

This sermon, one of Joseph Smith's most famous from the Nauvoo period, is perhaps more akin to Foucault's challenge to the search for origins than to Judeo-Christian originalism.

⁹⁷ Joseph Smith Jr., "The King Follett Sermon," April 7, 1844, repr. in *Ensign*, April 1971, 2-3, <http://lds.org/ensign/1971/04/the-king-follett-sermon?lang=eng>.

⁹⁸ Bloom, 101.

Smith argues against an originary episode, suggesting instead that previously existing material was “organized” into recognizable matter—to echo Foucault, humans were “fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.”⁹⁹ The reenactment of the sermon also (though almost certainly unintentionally) contests traditionally held LDS beliefs about the divinity of the prophetic mantle. Within LDS doctrine, the chain of priesthood authority is presented as an unbroken chain of stretching back to the Garden of Eden and including former prophets of the New and Old Testaments; however, this diachronic line of divine succession is challenged by the unruly and uncontrollable meanings of embodied performance.

The reenactment of King Follett’s sermon is performed by the actor who plays Joseph Smith in the nightly pageant, and this surrogation reveals some of the problematic issues that emerge from having a living prophet. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach uses the term “effigy” to explain the complicated relationship between performance and memory:

Effigy’s similarity to performance should be clear enough: it fills by means of surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of an original. Beyond ostensibly inanimate effigies fashioned from wood or cloth, there are more elusive but more powerful effigies fashioned from flesh. Such effigies are made by performances. They consist of a set of actions that hold open a place in memory into which many different people may step according to circumstances and occasions.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 142.

¹⁰⁰ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 36.

The Mormon faith is unique among contemporary Christian denominations for its belief in a living prophet who speaks to God and leads the church not through careful personal judgment but through actual divine guidance. The mantle of Joseph, as it were, continues to rest upon the man (in the LDS church, only a man may become the prophet) who is called as president of the church and “prophet, seer, and revelator.”¹⁰¹ The men who assume this position thus perform as effigies of Joseph Smith, the literal embodiment of his prophetic power.

But what of the actor who plays Joseph Smith in the King Follett discourse vignette? He, too, functions as effigy of Smith, though a more complicated one than the current president of the church. Although the current president is not unreachable, he is nevertheless generally distant from members. Most members will never meet the president, although they will certainly be familiar with his name, face, and teachings. Pilgrims who travel to Nauvoo, however, *can* meet the actor standing in and witnessing for Smith, an interaction that emphasizes the founder’s embodiment. Members and non-members alike therefore must acknowledge that Joseph Smith was not only semi-mythical historical figure but also an embodied human being. This acknowledgement brings a new dimension to a spectator’s relationship with the doctrines taught by Joseph Smith in the King Follett discourse—spoken by an actor, the doctrines become living and mutable, the opposite of codified scripture.

For some members, such an encounter with prophetic embodiment can reaffirm their belief in Smith and his teachings or even encourage the creation of such a belief. For others, however, this encounter presents a challenge to faith. If Smith was merely a man, surely this sermon certainly could be personal musings rather than divine inspiration, since the line between

¹⁰¹ The official title for the acting president of the LDS Church.

speaking as a prophet and speaking as a man (or actor) is, at times, tremulously fine. Because the King Follett performance is so intimate, then, it becomes quite a high-stakes gamble for the church. While it may, perhaps, encourage a swelling of faith among believers, its reliance on performance as a medium of connection and instruction could just as easily challenge the very foundations of religious belief—especially the Mormon notion of an infallible prophet.

Another vignette, titled “Trail of Hope,” presents a slightly different perspective of the Old Nauvoo experience. In the pageant and most of the Nauvoo Remembered vignettes, the focus is squarely on key founding members of the church, primarily Joseph Smith. “Trail of Hope,” however, offers a representation of the mostly unknown pioneers who followed Brigham Young out of Nauvoo and across the continent to the Utah territory. Perhaps more than any other performance featured in Nauvoo during pageant month, this vignette relies on the functions of ghosting and genealogical identification to elicit reactions from spectators, and becomes another performance of genealogy.

The performance consists of several individual actors portraying actual pioneers who left the city along this trail in February 1846. The actors are stationed along the pathway, which leads directly into the Mississippi (the river was frozen when the westward-bound pioneers crossed it) and provides a clear view of the rebuilt temple; spectators walk from one performer to the next, listening to the pioneers’ stories, which are taken from journals and other historical documents. The *mise en scène* of the performance perfectly replicates a popular visual representation of the exodus, LDS painter Glen Hopkinson’s *Final Farewell* (fig. 3.16). Unlike the other vignettes, which take place in the late morning or early afternoon and are conveniently located, this one is presented at dawn and is on the edge of town, forcing spectators to make a conscious effort to

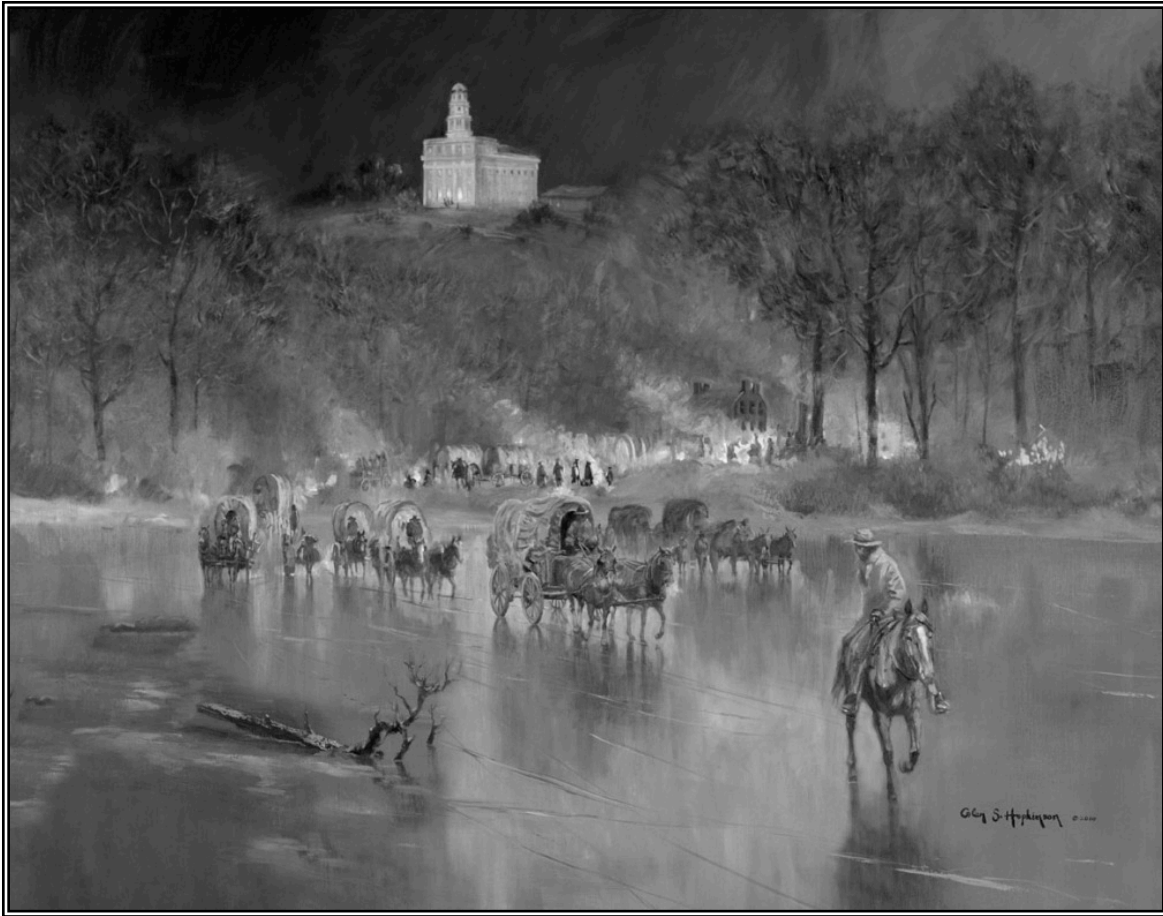


Figure 3.16: Glen Hopkinson, *Final Farewell*.

attend. One result of this scheduling seems to be that most spectators are members of the LDS church. On the morning I attended the performance, everyone I spoke to in line was a member; many were participating in the pageant as members of the family casts.¹⁰² Because this particular vignette seems to be more focused on offering a site where “modern-day Saints come to a sacred space to learn about and tell their sacred stories,” than the others, it very much draws on a common LDS understanding of pioneer sacrifice and its continued importance.¹⁰³

¹⁰² “Trail of Hope,” Nauvoo Remembered Vignette, Nauvoo, IL, July 11, 2009.

¹⁰³ Rodger Sorensen, interview with the author, Provo, UT, August 18, 2008.

Talks and lessons given by LDS leaders remind current members of the desperate trials faced by those who came before, and often those difficulties are compared to the contemporary issues faced by modern-day members, as in this passage by the church's current president, Thomas S. Monson: "But what of today's challenge? Are there no rocky roads to travel, no rugged mountains to climb, no chasms to cross, no trails to blaze, no rivers to ford? Or is there a very present need for that pioneer spirit to guide us away from the dangers that threaten to engulf us, and lead us to a Zion of safety?"¹⁰⁴ Monson's evocation of the pioneer past here makes ample use of geographical metaphors, metaphors that work for his audience primarily because they have heard of these stories of pioneer triumph over many years, some of them over lifetimes, and these geographies of struggle have become a part of their imaginary landscape: this is not the first chasm, river, or rocky road that members have imagined, nor will it likely be the last. As Diana Taylor puts it, "cultural memory is, among other things, a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection. . . . There is a continuum between inner and outer, much as there is between the live present and the living past, and a notion (or act of imagination, perhaps) that individuals and groups share commonalities in both the here/now and there/then, made evident through embodied experience."¹⁰⁵ The shared commonalities are the experiences of struggle borne by the bodies of members, past and present.

This shared pioneer past, within which members of the LDS church are encouraged to think of themselves as contemporary incarnations of those who struggled to build their temple and cross the river, relies on a communal understanding of Nauvoo's history and spatial

¹⁰⁴ Thomas S. Monson, "Come Follow Me," *Ensign* (July 1988), accessed December 15, 2010, <http://lds.org/ensign/1988/07/come-follow-me?lang=eng>.

¹⁰⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 82.

meaning, one which emphasizes certain narratives over others. Space, according to Henri Lefebvre, carries memory and yet its meaning is always socially determined in the present: “the historical and its consequences, the ‘diachronic,’ the ‘etymology’ of locations in the sense of what happened at a particular spot or place and thereby changed it—all of this becomes inscribed in space. The past leaves its traces; time has its own script. Yet this space is always, now and formerly, a *present* space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality.”¹⁰⁶ For believing members, the performative space of historical Nauvoo is inscribed with the memory of events that transpired there: Joseph Smith’s radical revelations on the nature of godhood and marriage, the institution of baptisms for the dead, and the beginning of modern-day temple practices. Additionally, this memory is overlaid with the doctrinal imperative to identify with and redeem the dead—Nauvoo has meaning not just as a historical site but also as a physical and geographical manifestation of the LDS mission to always remember.

Rethinking Genealogy: Haunted Site, Haunted Bodies

No matter how much the LDS or Community of Christ churches try to advance particular narratives, the individual tourist or pilgrim ultimately determines the meaning generated by a visit to Nauvoo. Historian David Lowenthal, like Lefebvre, argues that space and landscape are determined at least in part by visitors’ preceding expectations:

We need the past, in any case, to cope with present landscapes. We selectively perceive what we are accustomed to seeing; features and

¹⁰⁶ Lefebvre, 37.

patterns in the landscape make sense to us because we share a history with them. Every object, every grouping, every view is intelligible partly because we are already familiar with it, through our own past and through tales heard, books read, pictures viewed. We see things simultaneously as they are and as we viewed them before; previous experience suffuses all present perception.¹⁰⁷

Most tourists and visitors I encountered in Nauvoo were members of either the LDS or Community of Christ church; the town is not easy to get to, and does not appear to have a large amount of incidental tourism (though, like many Mormon tourist sites, it inspires a number of antagonistic visitors each year). For tourists of these two faiths, the very space of Nauvoo is representative of the inspiring and divisive personality of Joseph Smith; for even the casual tourist, Smith's ghostly presence is inescapable.

Historic Nauvoo is also, however, haunted with the people, images, and events of LDS church's larger past, beyond just that of Smith and his early followers. Within the boundaries of the site, the LDS church attempts to organize performance and space in order to transmit certain narratives of LDS experience and create performative links between the present and the past, embodying the church's larger genealogical project through living history, pageants, and historical vignettes. Alongside these official performances, however, are more obscure, though not necessarily hidden, performances of identity. These performances, discoverable through an excavation of seemingly "everyday" practices among LDS visitors and reenactors in Nauvoo,

¹⁰⁷ David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* 65.1 (Jan 1975): 6.

transmit distinct cultural practices among believers, quietly codifying certain behaviors while denying or regulating others.

The contemporary LDS church culture is almost radical in its conservatism, in spite of rising out of a radically subversive revision of Christianity and the conservative mores of the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Believing members adhere to restrictive codes of conduct that police eating habits, dress standards, and moral behaviors. Each of these behavioral codes are passed down through generations within the church, becoming more and more codified as social inhibitors and moving away from their former, more loosely interpreted status as suggestive doctrine. It is common knowledge within the church, for example, that restrictive and rigidly established doctrines such as the “Word of Wisdom,” which circumscribes what LDS members can eat and drink, emerged as a suggestion because Emma Smith did not like the men of the church chewing tobacco and spitting it on her floors. Nevertheless, this moral code of behavior has become a central practice among believers, separating the faithful—who abstain not only from tobacco but also from alcohol, caffeine, and other “harmful or illegal substances”—from the world at large.

There are also other, more insidious, cultural behaviors that have been cultivated (and occasionally challenged) throughout a century and a half of religious practice and that lurk beneath the surface of historical sites like Nauvoo. In order to uncover such behaviors and practices, Roach suggests engaging in a genealogies of performance, which “document—and suspect—the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective

¹⁰⁸ Harold Bloom suggests that “nineteenth-century Mormonism, in its deepest implications, had the same relation to Christianity that early Christianity had to Judaism.” Bloom, 96.

representations.”¹⁰⁹ Such genealogies, he continues, “attend to ‘counter-memories,’ or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences.”¹¹⁰ The genealogies of performance that can be excavated at a site like Nauvoo can go some way toward revealing the “disparities” between the stories told and the experiences of actual tourists and pilgrims who visit.

Primary among the debates surrounding the early church and its later incarnations (especially the mainline LDS church) is the question of who was permitted to receive the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s tenure as president of the church. Scholars on the whole agree that two later disenfranchised groups, women and black members, were initially given the priesthood and allowed to practice healings and other rituals restricted to priesthood-holders. Later, under Brigham Young’s leadership, the priesthood was limited to non-black men in the church (some early temple and priesthood blessings were even retroactively voided under Young’s and, later, John Taylor’s stewardship of the church). This history is not included in any of the official pageants, though for many visitors, it remains inscribed upon their bodies, the inescapable result of their sex or skin color, each of which shapes the range of possible experiences they may have both within the church and at its sacred sites, such as Nauvoo.

Lavina Fielding Anderson, an LDS woman who was excommunicated for her intellectual inquiries into abuses of power within the male-dominated hierarchy of the church, argues that the church as an institution and the gospel as theology have become increasingly separated: “against a religion that has increasingly become a multiplication of forms and observances, catechisms

¹⁰⁹ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 25.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

and orthodoxies, the exuberant expansiveness of Mormon theology pits itself with vitality and vigor.”¹¹¹ This conundrum of the religion that is at odds with the faith plays out in the official histories performed by the church administration in Nauvoo and the covert tourist performances that can challenge those performances.

Within the pageant and the vignettes, women are portrayed in a distinctly traditional manner: they are strong, yet silent; resolved, yet submissive. They may, at times, contest authority, but are always convinced of the truth and power that resides in strict obedience. In other words, they are placed firmly within the trope of the docile female whose appearance and actions are, presumably, determined by the immutable characteristics of her gender but actually reflect the power and persuasiveness of a patriarchal system where God’s authority is rooted in a male line of privilege. This performed trope obscures, however, the actual embodied history at the base of female participation in early Nauvoo: women administered priesthood blessings, they openly challenged church authorities on the issue of polygamy, and they taught and administered to one another in female-centered societies that bore their own priesthood authority.

Although the bodies of contemporary female members of the church do not, on the surface, overtly bear the memory of this early history, knowledge of these devotional performances by women in the Nauvoo church can provide touristic tactics for engaging with the histories presented at the site. These women of the early church were often deeply committed to the religion, yet unafraid to confront authority or demand their rights and blessings within the faith, and their performances of contestation can provide a pattern for touristic encounters with sacred space beyond a performative dialectic of believer/antagonist. Michel De Certeau argues

¹¹¹ Lavina Fielding Anderson, “Freedom of Conscience: A Personal Statement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26.4 (Winter 1993): 199.

that tactics, which allow a tourist to challenge the historical narratives advanced by curators, “must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers.”¹¹² Recovering the past performances of women in the early church is making use of these cracks, introducing possible touristic roles for women who visit Nauvoo outside of the modest, docile beings presented in the LDS-sanctioned performances featured at the site.

Regardless of a visitor’s intentions, expectations, or positioning, historical tourist sites rely on the uniquely disconcerting alchemy of haunting to create viable experiences for visitors. “Being haunted,” sociologist Avery Gordon suggests, “draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.”¹¹³ In Mormon parlance, this “transformative recognition” spurred on by surges of feeling associated with long-buried pasts is often referred to as a “witness of the spirit” or the creation of a “testimony.” Mormons, in spite of a perpetually chipper and forward-looking view of the world, spend an awful lot of time seeking out hauntings—immersed in scriptural and historical study, committed members strive for a kind of communion with both God and their ancestors, looking for entry into the structure of feeling that typifies LDS religious experience.

The transformative recognition that many visitors may feel upon visiting Nauvoo may, however, have little to do with an increasing faith in the LDS church and everything to do with an increasing awareness of the performances that have codified certain beliefs and behaviors

¹¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 37.

¹¹³ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

within the church's culture and doctrine. The post-Brigham Young LDS church continued to codify cultural practices that circumscribed the roles of women, blacks, and intellectuals, resulting in a further centralization of white, patriarchal power in the church that is reflected in the church's sacred sites. However, recognizing the issues being avoided in discussions of the sacred space of Nauvoo can allow tourists to reconsider their own embodied position in relation to the stories and performances being used to "preach the gospel with power" – which may include the obscuring of certain unpleasant doctrines and past practices. This recognition could, through the tactical deployment of performed tourist identities, work to imagine "alternatives to our present condition" within the church.¹¹⁴

In the introduction to their 2003 collection *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga include an explanation of Stuart Rockefeller's conception of space, a theory that insists that public places are produced by "individual movements, trips, and digressions." They continue: "starting with [Nancy D.] Munn's idea that the person makes space by moving through it, [Rockefeller] traces how movement patterns collectively make up locality and reproduce locality. Places, he argues, are not in the landscape, but simultaneously in the land, people's minds, customs, and bodily practices."¹¹⁵ As early church members migrated from upstate New York to the West, they left their physical imprint upon the lands they crossed, and, through various cultural performances

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Arac, *Critical Genealogies: Historical Situations for Postmodern Literary Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 2.

¹¹⁵ Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, "Locating Culture," in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. Seth M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 6. See also Della Pollock, ed., *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998).

including burials, religious meetings, and spiritual experiences, created spontaneous localities in the landscape.

The relationship between the pioneers and the landscape was multifaceted, and their experiences were understandably deeply shaped by their interaction with this space. Importantly, the experience of this crossing, now etched into the bones and flesh of those who survived the arduous journey, became a central element of the foundation narrative of the LDS church and, in turn, influenced members' mental understanding of the land. Therefore, the places marked by the pioneer migration are now simultaneously geographical locations, historical sites, and imaginary spaces in members' minds and embodied practices.

After the move to Salt Lake, the church practices and beliefs became more codified; because they were now in a protected area fully separated from the United States by geographical boundaries, members and church leaders were able to focus on developing their Zion. For the first decades following the migration, there was little emphasis on the preservation or cultivation of the sites fundamental to the church's founding or to the pioneer trail: it was nearly fifty years after the early settlers had entered the Salt Lake valley that church leaders began to look at such locations as essential to the work of perpetuating memory among its members. Nora explains that such a shift is endemic in modern society and represents a society's lack of spontaneous memory, suggesting that "if we were able to live within memory, we would no have need to consecrate *lieux de mémoire* in its name."¹¹⁶ This would certainly seem to be the case with the early pioneers and their immediate descendants: there was no need to consecrate

¹¹⁶ Nora, 8.

such sites, since those sites and the occurrences associated with them were already inscribed upon their bodies.

Nora claims that true memory has “taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories.” This he compares to “memory transformed by its passage through history,” which is “nearly the opposite: voluntary and deliberate, experienced as a duty, no longer spontaneous.”¹¹⁷ As leaders began purchasing the lands and sites where remarkable moments in the church’s history had happened, they were in essence acknowledging that the kind of true memory that Nora speaks of was slipping away and needed to be bolstered with sites consecrated not by the collective experiences of the saints who had lived in and traveled through them but rather by the naming of these sites as religio-historical space. In LDS tradition, as each heritage site is set aside as sacred space, it is formally “dedicated” by a church leader; that is, a prayer is said on the site dedicating it to the work of promoting the church’s goals of spreading their gospel. The performative act of naming such places sacred is what transformed them from practiced or lived space into sacred, symbolic, and representational space.

For many members, in numbers that have been exponentially increasing over the last twenty-five years, allowing the spaces of the pioneer past to remain imaginary is no longer enough. As more and more latter-day pilgrims seeking a connection with their past trace the migratory route of the pioneers, they, in turn, influence what other members imagine of those spaces by bringing home new descriptions of these sacred spaces. Connerton emphasizes the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 13.

importance of a group's spatial experience (both material and mental) on the cultural imaginary of the individual who belongs to that group:

Groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localized and memories are localized by a kind of mapping. We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group. But these mental spaces . . . always receive support from and refer back to the material spaces that particular social groups occupy.¹¹⁸

By traveling to sacred sites and enacting spatial performance, individuals influence the group conception of these sites; the group then, in turn, influences individual spatial conception, creating a Möbius strip of spatialized performances of the religion and its foundational sites that is always tied to the material reality of the space.

The desire to experience that material reality, and the influence that such experience may have on one's understanding of the world and the LDS religion, is certainly a primary reason for participating in LDS-themed heritage tourism. Perhaps there is also, however, a desire to communicate with the past: to walk where Smith walked, to touch the window frame where he uttered his last words, to see the very spot where Brigham Young "became" Joseph Smith. The sites, and the performances featured there, seek to break down the spatio-temporal boundaries separating LDS tourists from their spiritual ancestors. Though there is no literal calling forth of the ghosts of the past, the echoes of events and personalities associated with the spaces reverberate throughout visits to the sites, even for tourists who know very little about the church, its origins, and its divisions.

¹¹⁸ Connerton, 37.

These past performances of the sacred also offer possibilities for tactical touristic engagement, the opportunity for embodied encounters to challenge the historical narratives presented by the Mormon denominations that curate Historical Nauvoo. As the performative space of the site draws tourists and pilgrims alike into its embodied memory, it simultaneously performs its past and present, allowing visitors to construct their own sacred experience and build their own sacred place through experience and the social interactions and contestations that create and maintain the site's meaning. Excavating the performed pasts of this sacred site not only reveals the history of its sacralization, but the possible patterns of resistance that can change the LDS church's present.

Writing about the modern practice of separating cemeteries from the city proper, Roach asks the haunted question at the root of much historical practice: "If the dead are forever segregated, how are the living supposed to remember who they are?"¹¹⁹ Roach's tricky usage of "they" (who is the antecedent? The dead? Or the living?) reveals some of the ambivalence surrounding the practice of history: for whom are we preserving the past? For members of the Mormon church(es), it is for both the dead and the living: there is personal growth that comes from understanding the historical underpinnings of the church and the possibility of identifying personal struggles with those of members who came before. Additionally, recovering history is important for the dead, because they can benefit from work done vicariously by the living. Indeed, preserving LDS history and remembering ancestors is not an abstract idea for members, but an embodied practice. Members participate in rituals on behalf of the dead, with the belief that one day all will be resurrected and re-embodied and will need to have that work done for

¹¹⁹ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 55.

them. Along with these rituals, participation in heritage tourism and performance serves to further anchor that history in the material realities of historical bodies and spaces, each of which are consecrated by and for God.

Conclusion

Time Travel

A whole history remains to be written of *spaces*—which would at the same time be a history of *power*—from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.
—Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*

VLADIMIR: Time has stopped.

POZZO: (*cuddling his watch to his ear.*) Don't you believe it, Sir, don't you believe it. (*He puts his watch back in his pocket.*) Whatever you like, but not that.

—Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

In recent years, performance theorists have turned ever more attention to questions of time in theatre and performance. Echoing postmodernism's obsession with time that does not "flow," but rather "percolates," these scholars' works have investigated the myriad ways in which theatrical time and performative time warp, repeat, double back, and generally function in ways that challenge linear, progressive conceptions of time.¹ Although space is often considered

¹ Michael Serres with Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 58. For performance theorists interested in these questions of theatrical and performative time, see Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing the Past through Performance* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007); Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Tracy C. Davis, "Performative Time," in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. Charlotte Canning and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 142-67; Alice Rayner, *Ghosts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); and Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

in these studies, in many ways, spatial function and meaning are examined only inasmuch as they affect the way that time is perceived through and influenced by performance. What is often skipped over is the fact that, as Michel Foucault argues, an analysis of *space* is simultaneously an analysis of *power*—the power to name, designate, and define the terms by which life and art are represented and understood, including time.² Although she is writing specifically about communication studies, Raka Shome’s argument could be an indictment of performance scholarship as well: “what remains insufficiently addressed,” she writes, “are the very real and material ways in which space constitutes a site and a medium for the enactment of cultural power.”³ I have argued throughout this dissertation that a rigorous examination of the geographies of history and performance—the ways in which embodied performance and produced space collude in the production of history and cultural memory—has been particularly absent in recent works of performance scholarship.

This study, then, is a reaction to that perceived absence and an attempt to reassert the primacy of space in performance studies. It is an intervention in the debate about performance’s influence upon conceptions of time and history, refracted through the lens of human geography. By exploring the theatrical nature of space and the roles that performative spaces play in the construction and circulation of national histories, I attempt to shift focus from time to space or, more accurately, to share focus between time and space in my analysis of how knowledge is produced through memorial and heritage performances. Thus the particular modes of bodily enactment explored within these pages—pageants, first-person interpretation, tourist

² Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 149.

³ Raka Shome, “Space Matters: The Power and Practice of Space,” *Communication Theory* 13.1 (2003): 40.

performances, and reenactments at historical tourist sites—are placed side by side with performative analyses of how the spaces of historical tourist sites likewise *perform* and *produce* historical knowledge and cultural memory through those performances.

A primary reason that historical tourist sites function as unique producers of history and memory is that they exude an appearance of fixity, using space as an anchor in the past. Curators of these sites attempt to create the impression that the location’s geographical rootedness can “stop time” and arrest the forward progression of linear chronology; this illusion of stalled time then fashions seemingly stable, clear, and often nationalized narratives that help define what is sacred, what is patriotic, and what is the “correct” way to do history. Karen Till describes the alchemic illusion of spatial fixity at historical sites thus: “Euclidean science tells us moderns that no two things can be simultaneously in the same location; hence place has come to signify a fixed quality, of being situated, of locational and temporal stability. We often assume that these rules of located site also apply to time. Because we think of places as stable, we often understand them as having a timeless quality.”⁴ This apparent timelessness encourages visitors to uncritically accept the version of history being offered at a site by reinforcing a notion of history as complete, finished, and wholly in the past.

Neither space nor history, however, is stable or complete; both are constantly being refashioned in the present. As Michel de Certeau argues, history is *produced* by historians, and thus does not have a “beginning” that can explain the present. Rather, “historians begin from present determinations. Current events are [historical events’] real beginning.”⁵ Performance

⁴ Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 14.

⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 11.

complicates the production of history even further by forcing spectators and participants to more closely consider the body in history. Bodies make history, bodies take up space, bodies carry memory, bodies perform historically, and, while bodies can be constrained and structured by spatial relations, they can also enact performances of resistance and subversion. Thus, travel to historical sites, as a particularly embodied form of history-making, is simultaneously a participation in the construction and a breaking down of the performative space that typifies memorial places.

Ultimately, this dissertation takes up Philip Sheldrake's call to "construct what might be called a 'narrative beyond easy narrative'" in order to make "space...for those whose stories have not been heard."⁶ This attention to "other" narratives requires a clear focus on the performative power of spaces and places in the construction of narratives and the roles that historical stories play in the formation of communities and nations. The policing of memorial spaces determines not only who belongs and how people are permitted to perform within those spaces, but also who is allowed to write history and how the past is remembered. Therefore, peeling back the veneer of performative space and revealing the politics and processes of its construction and maintenance can encourage historical tourists and curators alike to "connect...history to a place, [which] is the condition of possibility for any social analysis. [...] Taking the place seriously is the condition that allows something to be stated that is neither legendary (or 'edifying') nor atypical (lacking relevance)."⁷ Though this project focuses on a particular kind of memorial space, the larger arguments about performative space as created and

⁶ Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 22.

⁷ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 69.

circulated through performance can be applied much more widely; in this way, I propose that to study the social construction of space is to consider the ways in which *performance* becomes “the condition of possibility for social analysis” and “the condition that allows something to be stated that is neither legendary (or ‘edifying’) nor atypical (lacking relevance).”

This is not to claim that attention to the performative nature of place and space enables a coherent, stable ideology of its own. I agree with Henri Lefebvre that there are an infinite number of spaces—at least as many as there are people who visit or imagine them.⁸ Therefore, the study of performative space actually allows for a fracturing of completeness and revels in the fluid and ever-changing nature of space, performance, and tourism. All the conclusions and claims that I make in this study are refracted through my own encounters with the places and spaces of each site and enabled by my own voluntary mobility. This project began in 2008 with a purely touristic visit to Palmyra, New York, a sacred LDS site; over the last four years, I have shifted from a tourist to an academic, though such distinctions are always fuzzy and, like performance and space, fluid.

My privileged position as a traveling scholar also reveals something of the class stratification that is present in both placemaking and historical tourism. Although memorial places are ostensibly meant for all (or, at any rate, all who would like to visit them), in reality tourism is a leisure activity only available to economically advantaged classes. I do not examine the class status of tourists very deeply in this dissertation, but the division between those who can travel for pleasure and those who are either forced to travel or compelled by economics to stay in one place haunts the entire study. No where is this distinction clearer than in the

⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

juxtaposition of leisure travelers (and even pilgrims) and the people who live in and are unable to travel from the touristic “honeypot”; this superimposing of mobility and stasis continually reenacts the uneven power relations that distinguish between those who are free to wander from place to place, whether as a scholar or a tourist, and those who are bound to a place, by choice or otherwise. As Dennis Judd writes, “tourist bubbles create islands of affluence that are sharply differentiated and segregated from the surrounding...landscape. [...] They are places of pure consumption for people who are more affluent than those living in the surrounding community.”⁹

The study of performative spaces reveals these distinctions and throws the privileges and politics of place and history-making into high relief. Through this process of digging, though, participants in the performance of history can, as Sandra Richards admonishes, “‘remember otherwise’ to the comfortable narratives we have read and/or performed. Ghosts from the past re-emerge from the places in which tourism would secure them, seducing us with their similarity to our present yet offering us ambiguous counsel that dares us to think, ask, feel, imagine, and act beyond what we already know.”¹⁰ Finally, then, this dissertation is about the ghosts that linger around and permeate historical narratives, spaces, and performances, prodding us to transcend the obvious and to perform new spaces.

⁹ Dennis R. Judd, “Constructing the Tourist Bubble,” in *The Tourist City*, ed. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 53.

¹⁰ Sandra Richards, “Space, Water, Memory: Slavery and Beaufort, South Carolina,” *Cultural Dynamics* 21.3 (2009): 275.

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