

Naming, Identity and Tourism

Edited by

Luisa Caiazzo, Richard Coates
and Maoz Azaryahu

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CHAPTER THREE

FROM THE SPELL OF A NAME TO THE FEAR OF A NAME: TOURISM AND IDENTITY

LUISA CAIAZZO

1. Introduction

The associative potential stemming from names makes them a powerful ideological and political tool. By the same token, such a resource can do magic when it comes to tourist sites and their identity. Far from simply designating a location, names pepper visitors' imagination with a myriad of narratives that mould the profile of places and arouse curiosity. To a considerable extent, the wonder comes from the language gravitating around names with the meanings it may trigger.

From an ideological point of view, in recent years, the study of place naming has undergone a significant renaissance, as shown by the emergence of a critical literature that explores the social context and ideological dimensions of geographical naming. Within this critical turn in toponymic studies, the relevance of place (re)naming as a social negotiation process is especially evident in times of political change, when collective memories—and the names celebrated with them—often stem from manipulating rather than recording the past in order to create or mould the present (Azaryahu 1996). Accordingly, the social function of memory is brought to the fore, as it lays the foundation of the traditions to be invented (Hobsbawm 1983), the historical events to be re-enacted and the narratives to be promoted.

These commemorative decisions, which are strategic to setting new political agendas, have also become part of the narratives embedded in so-called cultural tourism. This kind of tourism largely relies on the historical and cultural traditions of places by pointing to selected events of their past that legitimize their present value in terms of cultural continuity, making

them worth visiting. As tourism increasingly comes to be associated with an “ideological framing of history and tradition for commercial purposes” (MacCannel 1992, 1), names may become part of this framing and be discursively construed along lines that are drawn by the social and economic drives of local communities.

The present chapter explores the discursive function of place names in shaping the identity of tourist sites, considering how they interact with the verbal environment around them in a sample selection of texts. The point being made is that mundane processes of using names, with their quality of constant reiteration, contribute to building up and stabilizing the ascribed properties of a place, hence its “meaning.” Following some considerations on the discursive construction of names, the chapter will focus on the names of two places, namely Salem (Massachusetts, USA), nicknamed “Witch City,” and Colobrarò (Basilicata, Italy), renowned for being unmentionable given the bad luck associated with its name. The analysis points to the meanings conveyed by the two names discussed and to the identity they shape for tourism purposes. The closing section offers some remarks on the embeddedness of place-names in the discursive fabric of communities.

2. Names and their discursive construction

The notion of names reverberating with meanings that go beyond the mere function of identifying a unique referent is almost a given when we think of personal names, as they are often used in both everyday discursive practices and in literature to incorporate—layer after layer—the life of an individual. In broader terms, this is also true of place-names, in virtue of the dramatic role they play in the social construction of space, be it the ideological and political framing of space into place (Azaryahu 1996 and 2011; Alderman 2008; Vuoltenaho and Berg 2009), the space-place of collective memory (Caiazzo 2017), or the tourism space moulded into attractive place (Light 2014). Far from being static entities, the identities thereby shaped tend not only to be dynamically negotiated as a result of the social and economic issues at stake, but also instantiated by language and discursively construed. As “discourse,” in the sense being used here, encapsulates “recurrent phrases and conventional ways of talking, which circulate in the social world, and form a constellation of repeated meanings” (Stubbs 1996, 158), observing the role that names play in a broad range of instances of language in use provides insights into the identities of speakers/writers as well as the views of the community to which they belong. In other words, what is said and written about and

around names allows us to draw a picture of the meanings attached to them as a response to societal changes and needs.

The most straightforward process that personal names may undergo is related to relevant turns along the path of our existence. For example, a new name is often equated with a new life as the renaming is charged with the performative power of marking the rebirth of an individual. A fictional rendition of this re-enactment of the baptismal ritual is provided by the story of Malik Solanka, the main character of Salman Rushdie's novel *Fury* (2001), a former academic who comes to New York to start over. The sacredness of his new life initiation ritual is ironically marked by the "benison of being Ellis Islanded," and further stressed by the names by which he might be baptized—a "Buzz," a "Chip" or a "Spike"—each of them winking at the different kind of person that might be born out of them:

This was the great truth against which Malik Solanka had set his face. It was precisely his back-story that he wanted to destroy. [...] He had come to America as so many before him to receive the benison of being Ellis Islanded, of starting over. Give me a name, America, make of me a Buzz or Chip or Spike (2001, 45).

Once the character is able to see "the great truth" with which he has eventually come to terms, namely that he wants to erase his "back-story," his name "Malik" is swallowed up in the vortex of negativity and has to be destroyed as it encapsulates his past. Conversely, the new names that he could take on are surrounded by a positive verbal setting: they enter the scene following the invocation to a personified America who, like a mother, is expected to offer the new-born not only a name but also a supporting environment.

An example on a greater scale is provided by the name of Christopher Columbus which, across the centuries, has moulded to the amazing variety of contents with which it has been filled, ranging from facts to interpretations and connotations. The name became legendary after the Declaration of Independence in 1776 when Columbus was seen as an intrepid explorer setting out into the unknown, in a sense, like the new citizens of the United States. Then in 1892, when discovery and progress were coupled together to herald American industrial expansion, he was venerated as a symbol of progress. Also, after Columbus was presented as the first immigrant to America, his name was used as a means to mitigate the conflicts resulting from the massive immigration of the second half of the nineteenth century. Finally, about twenty years before the latest centenary in 1992, the mythic, sacred Columbus was deemed worth

celebrating with a federal holiday named after him, namely *Columbus Day*. However, the Quincentenary marked the official beginning of the desecration of his name with the first renaming of *Columbus Day* as *Indigenous People's Day* in Berkeley, California, a defining turn in the discursive construction of Columbus's name in the public space of American collective memory. Since then, growing numbers of counties and cities throughout the United States have opted to celebrate *Indigenous People's Day* or *Native American Day* rather than *Columbus Day*, voicing the need of Native Americans "to assert their legitimate, prior place in America, past, present, and future" (Dennis 2002, 120).

Clearly, over time, Columbus's name has taken on different meanings, depending on whose history it was writing. A case in point are the texts recently displayed in the public space of celebrative rituals associated with the "Columbus Day vs. Indigenous People's Day" quarrel, which highlight the role that language plays in the process of (re)shaping collective memory through the meanings attached to names. More in detail, the signs carried during some of the counter-demonstrations that have taken place in the United States in the last few years abound in lexical choices and rhetorical strategies that definitely relegate Columbus's name to the area of negative social sanction (Martin and White 2005):

- (1) Columbus was a murderer not a hero.
- (2) Columbus was a rapist.
- (3) Stop genocide racism and imperialism. (Caiazzo 2017, 729-30).

In the examples reported, the word "genocide," with its dreadful connotations stemming from its first use in relation to the Holocaust perpetrated on European Jews in the twentieth century, unquestionably places Columbus's name in the semantic field of "crime" along with "murderer" (1) and "rapist" (2). Such a focus on the discursive construction of names may contribute to shedding light on how names are perceived and what they mean to people at a given time, especially so when it comes to controversial cases.

In this respect, place names draw an equally—possibly more complex—map, where personal experiences and memories intersect with social, historical, ideological and economic issues. A telling example is the renaming of Bombay as Mumbai, an initiative that was quite controversial when it was taken in November 1995, and is still debated, which shows how such reconfigurations, by striking at people's very identities, contribute to producing the meanings eventually embedded in names. Also in this case, the narratives revolving around the renaming process provide insights into the attitudinal orientations of the people involved as well as

into the meanings attached to those names. A sample collection of messages posted in British and Indian blogs between 2006 and 2013 has shown that the names Bombay and Mumbai fail at what is supposed to be their main job, namely identifying the city unequivocally both at home and abroad. Rather the opposite, they seem to be a matter of point of view, as highlighted by the bloggers. so much so that people may even wonder whether Bombay and Mumbai are the same place, or whether it really matters by which name the city is called, drawing a multilayered scenario in which narratives intersect with one another. In the resulting picture, identity seems to lie in the eye of the beholder: an identity stolen, i.e. the identity of the international metropolis of Western India, or the alleged Maratha identity whose flag has been hoisted by the promoters of the name change, or an Indian—as opposed to an Anglicized—identity. These copious and multifaceted reactions lead us to consider that the perspectives people take on the (re)naming of places provide a valuable source for an understanding of what may be conveyed through names (Caiazzo 2018).

Not surprisingly then, such a narrative potential may turn names into one of the resources available to promote tourist sites. In addition to the attitudinal orientations hinted at above, further insights into the meanings that names may take on are provided by the company they keep (Firth 1957), that is the verbal environment in which they occur. Once a name is primed for certain contexts (Hoey 2005), it may contribute to creating and fixating certain identities through reiterative discursive practices, and in so doing, it may reinforce a selected set of cultural markers:

By identity, as it refers to social actors, I understand the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning (Castell 2010, 6).

The features that are, in turn, prioritized for the sake of tourism are very likely to be inscribed in actual texts ranging from the very linguistic landscape¹ of a place to tourist guides, tourists' reviews, Tourist Agency websites, newspaper articles, TV programs, and to interviews with residents, or large collections of texts such as corpora. Along the lines of thought drawn so far, the two sections that follow focus on the words and meanings gravitating around the names of two tourist sites, namely Salem (Massachusetts, USA) and Colobrarò (Basilicata, Italy). Some illustrative examples from a selection of texts collected either in situ or online are provided, pointing to how the mutual relationship between the two names and their verbal contexts of use contributes to shaping the tourism identity of both places.

3. The spell of a name

When Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* in the 1950s, it was barely predictable that what he dubbed as “one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history” (Miller 2016 [1953], 2) would become the overflowing theme of Salem’s tourism in the years shortly to come, even though the seeds had been sown at the end of the previous century. As Miller himself observed in his *Journey to ‘The Crucible’* (1953), strolling around Salem at the time made him sense a place where everybody seemed to be oblivious to, possibly unaware of what happened in 1692:

“The Crucible” is taken from history. [...] The basic story is recorded, if briefly, in certain documents of the time. It will be a long time before I shall be able to shake Rebecca Nurse, John Proctor, Giles Corey and the others out of my mind. But there are strange, even weird memories that have connected themselves to this play, and these have to do with the present, [...] the great rock, standing mum over the Bay, the splintered precipice on which the gibbet was built. The highway traffic endlessly, mindlessly humming at its foot, but up here the barrenness, the clinkers of broken stones, and the vast view of the bay; here hung Rebecca, John Proctor, George Jacobs [...].

The rock stands forever in Salem. They knew who they were. Nineteen.

The awful chapter mentioned by Miller tells the story of the Salem Witch Trials, which ended with the execution of nineteen people accused of practicing witchcraft. Dreadfully enough, the victims lost their lives with no chance to disprove those charges as they were accused on the basis of such evidence as personal accusations, the presence of a “devil’s mark” on their bodies, or the so-called spectral evidence, namely evidence based on otherwise invisible spirits that the accusers claimed to be able to see. In the time of McCarthyism, this gruesome story became a commanding symbol, a synonym for mass hysteria, injustice and intolerance. As an unplanned side effect, the attention drawn to the Trials also contributed to fuelling a renewed interest in witchcraft-oriented tourism (Gencarella 2007, 278).

Since then, several threads have conflated to weave the present texture of Salem’s tourism market in which the patterns and colours of Salem’s maritime glory try to find elbow room among the revived ghosts of the Witch Trials. A case in point is the online version of the travel guide *Lonely Planet* (2018) that welcomes prospective tourists to Salem with a catchy photo of *The Custom’s House* and the sailing ship *Friendship of Salem* (a replica of the 200 years older *Friendship*), two landmarks of Salem’s past as the epicentre of global trade in post-colonial America. Yet,

below the picture, the short text that follows abruptly launches the reader into a rather different setting where the name “Salem” draws a place populated by fiendish witches and people being burned to death, i.e. the picture of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692:

This town's very name conjures up images of diabolical witchcraft and people being burned at the stake. The famous Salem witch trials of 1692 are ingrained in the national memory. Indeed, Salem goes all out at Halloween, when the whole town dresses up for parades and parties, and shops sell all manner of Wiccan² accessories.

What is understandably presented as a permanent scar in the space of American collective memory is soon wiped out by the glitter of present Halloween celebrations that pops up in the second half of the text. Salem's “true claim to fame” is eventually boosted only after clicking on the “read more” hyperlink at the end of the text quoted above:

These incidents obscure Salem's true claim to fame: its glory days as a center for clipper-ship trade with the Far East. Elias Hasket Derby, America's first millionaire, built Derby Wharf, which is now the center of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site.

Today Salem is a middle-class commuter suburb of Boston with an enviable location on the sea. Its rich history and culture, from witches to ships to art, continue to cast a spell of enchantment on all those who visit.

Although the past prestige of Salem as a maritime power is clearly acknowledged, it is still framed between an opening line that points once again to the Witch Trials—intriguingly dubbed as “incidents” conflicting with the truly worthy legacy—and the closing line where an unavoidable magic “spell” gives its blessing to any tourist experience “from witches to ships to art,” “witches” notably being the first item in the list. Split as it is between witchery whirls and maritime grandeur, the representation of Salem provided by *Lonely Planet* embodies a distillation of longstanding controversies about the identity that the Salemites might choose to foreground for the tourism market.

The witchcraft identity actually started to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century, making its shy appearance in a two-page “Sketches of Salem” published in the January 26, 1856, edition of the magazine *Ballou's Pictorial*, the city's first touring guide, where Gallows Hill, the presumed site of the executions, is mentioned along with Hawthorne's Custom's House and East India Marine Hall (Gencarella 2007, 273). Following various circumstances, the witchcraft related profile has progressively gained ground since the 1960s to become a defining feature,

especially after the filming in Salem of some episodes of the ABC series *Bewitched* in the 1970s. So much so that the main character, an attractive witch named Samantha Stephens (acted by Elizabeth Montgomery), was immortalized in bronze in Salem's Lippin Park. Unsurprisingly, when the statue was unveiled in 2005, debates were raised over Salem's historical soul, stirring old passions that would eventually be cooled down by the economic issues at stake:

The statue of Samantha Stephens illuminates nothing about seventeenth-century Salem witchcraft, latter-day Wiccans, or the state of Puritanism scholarship, but its very presence in Lippin Park speaks volumes about Salem's ever-evolving *economic* history. Indeed, in a deeply metaphorical way, Samantha Stephens embodies the economic transformation of Salem. She has displaced the symbol that came before her: the blue-collar worker. That worker, of course, had supplanted the seafarers and merchants who had dethroned the seventeenth-century yeomen who had been quick to blame witches for the social and economic turmoil of their world (Weir 2012, 205) [*italics in the original*].

Without neglecting the undeniable profits coming from past and present witchcraft-related narratives, attempts to promote a more comprehensive identity for Salem have recently been made. In 2011, *Destination Salem*, the tourism marketing organization for the city, adopted the new, more inclusive tagline "Still making history" in substitution for the old one, "A bewitching Seaport." Possibly more revealing than removing the winking "-witch-" from the tagline was its new marketing logo that can be interpreted as either a pointy witch hat or a sailboat (Fig. 3-1).

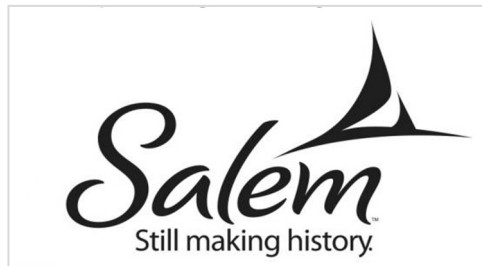


Fig. 3-1. *Destination Salem*: logo and tagline adopted in 2011.

Zooming into the new brand, the optical illusion generating a "hat-boat" image provokes further thought since it actually merges the two

identities once embodied in the very name “Salem:” Salem Village where most of the witchcraft hysteria occurred in 1692 and Salem Town with its maritime vocation. However, Salem Village no longer exists, being in an area now incorporated into the inland towns of Danvers and Peabody (Weir 2012, 184). The only place that still bears the name is contemporary Salem (Salem Town in the seventeenth century), which, since a certain point of its history, has been progressively enticed into appropriating the entire historical legacy of the Witch Trials to promote tourism, the very name being part of the story.

Although the most straightforward association with this legacy may be easily spotted in the nicknames later given to the city, i.e. “Witch City” or “The City of Witches,” the main interest here lies rather in the name “Salem” and what it has come to mean for the tourism industry. From this standpoint, “Salem” can be thought of as a word which is filled with the meanings triggered on the one hand by the city linguistic landscape in the very act of exploring the place, on the other hand, by a number of written/spoken texts, be they tourist guides, tourist reviews, documentaries, newspapers, books or any other kind of written/spoken material.

Considering the linguistic landscape that unfolds before the visitors’ eyes, as tourists leave the train station and head for the city centre, Washington Street welcomes them with a sign that gives directions for a number of sites in the Downtown District (Peabody Essex Museum, Visitor Center, McIntire Historic District, Waterfront District). However, what immediately follows is a cluster of signs that, at a short distance from one another, pervasively point to a “witchy” something. To mention but two of them, one directs visitors to the *Salem Witch Museum*, the other, *Salem Cycle*, is a bike shop sign whose logo is a witch riding a bicycle (Fig. 3-2). Walking down the street, each step taken unveils similar markers, from the statue of Samantha Stephens mentioned above to the overwhelming quantity of T-shirts on display in the shop windows that massively contribute to writing the city text around the witch theme.

Once at the Salem Visitor Center, located in Witch City Mall, tourists can pick up a City Guide with plenty of information about Salem. Intriguingly enough, about 60% of the activities proposed are related to either past or present witchcraft. A few examples are reported below which on the one hand stress the authenticity of all that is offered in relation to the trials heritage, on the other hand, promise thrilling experiences such as being guided by an actual practising witch or sensing the shivers very likely provoked by visiting haunted locations:



Fig. 3-2. Signs in Washington Street, Salem, MA (photos by author, 2018).

- (1) The Witch House - Salem's only building with direct ties to the Witch Trials, the 17th century home of Judge Jonathan Corwin
- (2) Salem Witch Hunt Film and Tours - the Salem Witch Hunt Film exposes the true causes and events behind Salem's witchcraft hysteria, featuring Witch Trials scholars and re-enactors at actual 1692 locations
- (3) Salem Witch Village - guided by a practicing witch, discover the myths and the facts surrounding witches and their craft!
- (4) Candlelit Ghostly Walking Tours - a guided journey through Salem by candlelit visiting many haunted locations

(Salem City Guide 2018, 26-32)

Moving from the actual city to the World Wide Web context, a broader perspective can be obtained from a large collection of texts such as that provided by the 2015 Web corpus, available on the Sketch Engine website.³ As a quantitative analysis is outside the scope of this chapter, some data are reported only as an illustrative example of the kind of information that we can get from a corpus containing a huge amount of documents. This is helpful to draw an overall picture of the verbal environment most frequently occurring around the name "Salem" in a wide range of texts. More in detail, just looking at the collocates for "Salem," i.e. the words that tend to co-occur in statistically significant ways, we find that the connection between Salem and the trials legacy is possibly stronger than expected. In addition, the fact that four out of the first ten collocates in the list refer to the Witch Trials (Table 3-1) is all the more telling if we consider that among the remaining six collocates, four are place names and two refer two a personal name.

#	Collocate	T-score	MI	logDice ⁴
3	Witch	40.824	3.152	8.710
5	witch	38.358	12.262	8.300
7	Trials	35.304	12.088	8.085
8	1692	25.979	14.748	7.793

Table 3-1. Collocates for “Salem” (Sketch Engine).

This short excursion into some of the linguistic environments around Salem shows that the name strongly resonates with the witchcraft theme, in spite of the “dewitchifying” efforts that are being made. Rather the opposite, the name has undergone a metonymic process and become a cognitive tool for the conceptualization of the notions of “witch hunt” and “witch trials” also in contexts other than those described so far. For example, in tourism discourse, the phrases “the Salem of Europe,” “the Italian Salem,” “the Ligurian Salem,” are variously used to refer to the town of Triora in the Liguria region of northern Italy, the site of the dreadful witch trials that took place in 1587. These phrases frame the name as promotionally effective, since being “a Salem” is part of the branding process that legitimizes Triora as a valuable tourist site, namely the best that you can get in Europe when it comes to witchcraft. Ultimately, the message conveyed is that Triora is as worth visiting as Salem and for very similar reasons.

Equally telling of the meaning that the name has taken on over the years is the expression “a Salem atmosphere,” meaning “witch hunt atmosphere,” that has recently gone viral when, in the wake of Harvey Weinstein’s sex abuse scandal (October 2017), actor and film director Woody Allen warned about

[...] a witch-hunt atmosphere, a Salem atmosphere, where every guy in an office who winks at a woman is suddenly having to call a lawyer to defend himself (Swenson 2017, *The Washington Post*).

His remarks prompted such a furious online backlash that just googling “a Salem atmosphere” one gets more than 150 hits reporting Woody Allen’s statement and the comments that have been made on it, which has certainly contributed to reinforcing the “witchcraft meaning” of Salem.

Such a spell, so to speak, has been cast over the name by a varied constellation of texts (some of which have been discussed above) that have progressively created for the city an identity revolving around past and present witches, so much so that it is with this meaning that the name has trespassed the boundaries of tourism discourse. In the words of Rinus

Oosthoek, who directs the Salem Chamber of Commerce, what Salem stands for “just fits. We’ll forever be the witch city, and people have accepted that. It’s part of our identity, and it brings people here from all over the world” (Schworm 2011, *The Boston Globe*).

Admittedly, although attempts are being made to promote a more inclusive identity of the place for the tourism market, apparently this is still to be inscribed in the discursive framing of the city.

4. The fear of a name

A name can cast a magic spell or be so frightening that it may call for defensive strategies, like the one in the second case study tackled here. Its story brings to mind J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* wizarding world, where nearly every witch or wizard dares not utter the unmentionable name of Lord Voldemort, the much feared leader of the Death Eaters, and refers to him instead with such expressions as “You-Know-Who,” “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” or “the Dark Lord.” Near the end of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Professor Dumbledore, one of the very few characters who calls Voldemort by his real name, encourages the protagonist to do the same: “Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself” (Rowling 1997, 240). A similar fate is shared by Colobrarò, a small village in the southern Italy region of Basilicata, as almost nobody ever speaks its name out of fear that it will bring curses upon them. Half mocking and half serious, most people simply refer to it as *Quel paese* (That village) or *Quel posto* (That place), as has also emerged from a number of interviews carried out with my Lucanian⁵ colleagues and students. Intriguingly, some of the students reported that they do not even know why *Quel paese* must not be mentioned, but they do so out of family tradition and, by doing so, they feel safer.⁶

A touch of authority is cast upon this cautionary naming practice also by the Wikipedia entry for Colobrarò that provides a paragraph titled “The village without a name” in the section “History.” Notably, the superstitious veil that has darkened this name for years is one of the first pieces of information that can be found in the website of the local Tourist Authority:

Il nome pare derivi dal latino “colubarium” che sta ad indicare un territorio pieno di serpenti, definizione attribuita per il paesaggio brullo, spoglio e arido che circonda il paese. [...] Ma la storia di Colobrarò è legata soprattutto a due aneddoti che spiegherebbero la sua “innominabilità.” Uno di questi risale a prima della seconda guerra mondiale e riguarderebbe l’affermazione di un uomo delle istituzioni del

tempo che, dovendo smentire un episodio specifico, avrebbe sostenuto: “Se non dico la verità, possa cadere questo lampadario”. A quanto pare il lampadario sarebbe caduto davvero! Un'altra versione rimanda tutto alla credenza nelle arti magiche di alcune donne di Colobrarò. (APT Basilicata 2019)

The name seems to derive from the Latin “colubarium”, meaning a land full of snakes, a definition related to the barren, bare and dry landscape around the village. [...] However, the history of Colobrarò is mainly associated with two anecdotes that would explain why it is “unnamable.” One goes back to the time before World War II, when a public officer, having to prove a specific episode wrong, is reported to have said: “If I’m not telling the truth, may this chandelier fall down”. Apparently, the chandelier did actually fall down! The other one refers to the belief in the witchcraft practiced by some women from Colobrarò. (*translation by author*)

While the chandelier episode is likely a legend given the lack of reliable sources available to back the story, the belief in the magical powers of some women from Colobrarò permeates a consistent part of the local oral traditions. In the 1950s, the topic was extensively studied by the anthropologist Ernesto de Martino and his team during the so-called “Lucanian expedition,” an ethnographic research project aimed to collect music, dances, literary texts and traditions from that area so as to draw a picture of the life and culture of Lucanian shepherds and peasants. As ironic as it may sound, de Martino himself contributed to spreading Colobrarò’s reputation as an unlucky village in his essay *Note di Viaggio* (Travel Notes), published in 1953 in the journal *Nuovi Argomenti* (New Topics):

Colobrarò è, per quel che se ne dice in Lucania, un paese di jettatori. A Matera ci hanno detto che quando un colobrarrese viene in città per sbrigare qualche pratica negli uffici, è consigliabile essere gentile con lui, e secondarlo per quanto è possibile. Altrimenti, non si sa mai. A Pisticci ci hanno pregato di evitare quel nome, e di usare una perifrasi, p. es. “il paese che non si dice”. A Ferrandina hanno predetto alla nostra spedizione gomme forate e altri malanni sulla salita di Colobrarò, e ancor peggio in paese, se avessimo deciso di sostarvi. (de Martino 1996, 117: quoted in Imbriani 2016, 202-203)

Colobrarò is, as far as they say in Lucania, a village of *jettatori*.⁷ In Matera, they told us that it is advisable to be kind and as far as possible please people who come from Colobrarò to have their paperwork taken care of in the public offices. Otherwise, one never knows. In Pisticci, they asked us to avoid speaking that name and to use a paraphrase instead, for example “the village that must not be named.” In Ferrandina, they foresaw that we would eventually have flat tyres and suffer from further misfortunes on our way up to Colobrarò, or even worse than that, had we decided to stay there. (*translation by author*)

Whatever the case, such an undesirable reputation has recently been turned into a tourist attraction that revolves precisely around the village's unmentionable name. Actually, cautiousness is still highly recommended as ironically suggested by the very name of the successful initiative promoted by the Mayor of Colobrarò, Andrea Bernardo: "Sogno di una notte ... a quel paese" (A night dream ... at that village), which echoes the title of Shakespeare's play *Midsummer Night's Dream* where magic meanders through each storyline. Following its first edition in 2011, every year in August the small village centre turns into a lively stage animated by itinerant representations performed by the inhabitants of Colobrarò. Guided by the Lucanian stage director Giuseppe Ranova, these well-trained non-professional actors re-enact stories from both the local oral traditions and legends (in 2018, the mentioned chandelier episode was also included) and the material collected by de Martino, in which the theme of misfortune is tackled with ironic self-mockery and sense of humour.

And it is with a touch of irony that tourists are immersed in a superstitious atmosphere as soon as they arrive. After being welcomed at *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* (Exhibitions Palace), they can buy a traditional amulet called *abitino*, a tiny cloth bag that used to contain anything believed to be effective against bad luck, from grains of wheat, to small pieces of horseshoes, straw crosses and more. Not surprisingly, it is advisable to wear the lucky charm provided while attending this multifaceted event, which also includes three exhibitions focused on local history: *Con gli Occhi della Memoria* (Through the Eyes of Memory) a photography exhibition by Franco Pinna, one of the members of de Martino's team, *La Civiltà Contadina* (Peasant Civilization) and *La Casa Contadina* (The Peasant House). The last, maybe not least, part of the experience consists in tasting typical Lucanian food.



Fig. 3-3. Poster advertising *Sogno di una Notte a ... Quel Paese*.

This many-sided (re)presentation of the local cultural heritage has created and developed inbound tourist activity, with a flow that has doubled over the last four years. By gradually erasing Colobrarò's unfortunate reputation and shaping the identity of a good rather than bad luck place, the ironic celebration of the unmentionable name is redefining the profile of "That village." Without neglecting the role played by the initiative itself that overtly aims at turning the burden of being unnamable into a tourist attraction, the equally notable role played by the discursive construction of this new identity is worth exploring.

Over the last few years, *Sogno di una Notte a ... Quel Paese* has received increasing coverage in the social media, in television programmes, the local press, and national newspapers. Most of these texts refer to Colobrarò as "That village," suggesting that what used to be a phrase protecting against evil eye is gaining currency as a proper name in its own right, its "properhood" being grounded on "a pragmatic rather than a structural notion" (Coates 2006, 356). "That village" is extensively mentioned in the reviews posted on the American travel website company *TripAdvisor*, where "Colobrarò" is used only 27 times out of a total of 95 reviews posted from September 2013 to August 2018.

Further legitimization of this tourism oriented revitalization of a negative naming practice is provided in news discourse where "That village"—occasionally "that place"—occurs in the headlines of articles reporting the successful summer event in a verbal environment marked by the interplay between positive evaluative linguistic choices and ironic wordplay. For example, the phrase "go to that village" is playfully used in virtue of its double meaning, as it brings to mind what in Italian is a mild way of saying "fuck off," which, however, in this case is an enjoyable experience as it refers to the summer event. This allusive meaning is also underlined by the use of inverted commas, i.e. "that village" (in some cases in capital letters like an actual place name):

- (1) *Il paese senza nome Porta sfortuna*
In Basilicata tutti lo chiamano "quel posto"
 The village without a name is bad luck
 In Basilicata, everybody calls it "that place"
 (La Stampa, 1/2007)
- (2) *A Colobrarò la scaramanzia attira turisti*
 In Colobrarò, superstition attracts tourists
 (La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno, 11/8/2013)
- (3) *Andate tutti a «quel paese» dove la iella è un bene contagioso*
 Go to "that village" where bad luck is a contagious resource
 (Il Giornale, 15/8/2016)

- (4) *Andiamo a Quel Paese! A Colobrarò la jella attira i turisti*
Let's go to That Village! In Colobrarò bad luck attracts tourists
(Marea inside, 21/6/2017)
- (5) *Colobrarò, il paese dove la iella è diventata una fortuna*
Colobrarò, the village where bad luck has become good luck
(La Repubblica Bari, 19/8/2017)
- (6) *La fortuna di "Quel paese:" la jella! E Colobrarò fa il botto*
The good luck of "That village:" bad luck! And Colobrarò makes splash
(Il Mattino di Basilicata, 9/9/2017)
- (7) *Andate a "quel paese." Colobrarò e il mito del borgo che porta sfortuna "scoperto" da Ernesto de Martino*
Go to "that place." Colobrarò and the myth of the hamlet that is bad luck "discovered" by Ernesto de Martino
(Il Corriere della Sera, 6/7/2018)
- (8) *La jella va in scena in "quel paese"*
A Colobrarò spettacoli di martedì e venerdì per tutto agosto
Bad luck goes on stage in "that village"
In Colobrarò, performances on Tuesdays and Fridays throughout August
(ANSA ViaggiArt Basilicata, 9/8/2018)
(translation by author)

The newly legitimized use of "That Village" as a positive name seems to be supported by an initiative that takes place at Christmas. As the poster in Fig. 3-4 shows, the name "That Village" has been considered promotionally productive given that *Sogno di una Notte a ... Quel Paese* has been paraphrased as *Un Magico Natale a ... Quel Paese* (A Magic Christmas at ... That Village).



Fig. 3-4. Poster advertising *Un Magico Natale a ... Quel Paese*.

Although the data available for Colobraro are understandably less abundant than those related to Salem, they clearly point to the defining role that a name—even a name with a bad reputation—may play in creating successful interactions between cultural heritage, local communities and tourists.

5. Concluding remarks

More than simply identifying locations, names are dynamic presences that contribute to defining the kind of relationship that a community establishes between their cultural heritage, their identity and the world of tourism. This process is embedded in the language gravitating around names and results into an accrual of meanings, which eventually ossify or evaporate across time.

For some time, Salem has comfortably accommodated the legacy of the Witch Trials that occurred in 1692, so much so that the name has not only become a brand in that respect, but is still unable to adjust to the emerging desire to represent a more comprehensive identity acknowledging the maritime past of the city. Following a different trajectory, Colobraro has been an unsettling name for some time, an uncomfortable condition which has unexpectedly paved the way to a successful branding strategy centred exactly upon the name. By turning superstition upside down, a new, favourable meaning is gradually taking shape for “That village” and increasingly drawing tourists’ attention.

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