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Notes for the Traveller: 
Introduction to the Journey Ahead

*If the humanities has a future as cultural criticism, and cultural criticism has a task at the present moment, it is no doubt to return us to the human where we do not expect to find it, in its frailty and at the limits of its capacity to make sense. We would have to interrogate the emergence and vanishing of the human at the limits of what we can know, what we can hear, what we can see, what we can sense.*

Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* 151

*To fully understand the moral imagination we will need to explore the geographies of violence that are known and the nature of risk and vocation, which permits the rise of an imagination that carries people toward a new, though mysterious, and often unexpected shore.*

Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination* 39

*I think that the human consists precisely in opening itself to the other of the other, in being preoccupied with his death.*

Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous to Be?* 124

In the first of the epigraphs above, Judith Butler lays down a challenge to scholars of the humanities. She asks us to turn our attention to the very figure of the human from which we derive our name and to interrogate what our responsibilities for the protection of the human might be. Such a task requires, as life-long mediator and peace-builder Paul Lederach writes, harnessing the power of imagination. Lederach urges us to think beyond violence, to think what might be otherwise.
Emmanuel Levinas, like Lederach, urges us to think beyond ourselves, stating that ethical work means to ‘envisage [...] a time without me, to aim at this world without me, to aim at a time beyond the horizon of my time’ (Basic Philosophical Writings 50). Such ‘thinking beyond’ involves a re-visioning of the given, which he suggests is the role of metaphor. Metaphor’s ‘absent contents’ point to what is beyond the given and ‘makes perception possible’ (36). Together the collective voices of Butler, Lederach and Levinas speak to the need for both creativity and compassion in the face of the acts of violence that each writes in response to. This book takes up the task of replying to these authors through offering an expanded understanding of the role that theatricality has to be played in making available to us the lost voices of absent others in order that they may urge us beyond the horizon of our own time and experience.

A small act, a question

The seed for this book came from the small act of turning on the radio. One Saturday morning in 2006 I listened to scholar Malcolm Foley talk about something called ‘dark tourism’, which he described as travel to sites of death and disaster. He spoke about bus tours through the devastation of post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, crowds at New York’s Ground Zero, and the increasingly popularity of Auschwitz as a stop on the tourist trails of Europe. At a museum to the development of nuclear technology in New Mexico, he said, tourists were able to sit inside a simulator that contained a large red button: if they pressed the button they would ‘witness’ the effects of the detonation of an atomic bomb. Immediately I was intrigued by the political and ethical implications of what he described and also by the designation of a specialized field of research. Although visiting sites of death and disaster is not necessarily a new phenomenon – nobility sat ‘ringside’ at the Battle of Waterloo (Lennon) – interest has piqued in recent years. Since the publication first of a special issue of the International Journal of Heritage Studies in 1996, and then, Dark Tourism: The Attractions of Death and Disaster, by Lennon and Foley in 2000, the volume and profile of scholarship has steadily grown. In 2012, for example, Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone published the edited collection, The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism. Spanning the various articles, books and conference papers are multiple approaches to naming and defining the phenomenon. Tony Seaton, in an article for the 1996 special issue of the International Journal of Heritage Studies, argued for the term ‘thanatourism',
drawing from the word ‘thanatopsis’, suggesting the tourism under scrutiny was part of a historical continuity of human contemplation of death. The work of Philip Stone and Richard Sharpley (2008) and Stone (2012), has sought to explain the motivations for dark tourism and builds upon Seaton’s premise, suggesting that it is because death has become sequestered within contemporary society that tourists, searching for the kind of ontological security absent in modern life, now seek it out at sites such as concentration camps. In 2012 Stone established the Institute for Dark Tourism Research at the University of Lancashire, which continues to promote academic and commercial research in the area as well as working towards boosting its public profile. The term is now also used in the media and by travel guides such as The Lonely Planet series. The Guardian online has a dark tourism tag within its travel section, which includes articles such as, ‘Forget Disneyland kids, we’re off to Colditz’, ‘Checking into the Bangkok Hilton’ and, ‘Strange and unsettling: my day trip to Chernobyl’.

Scholarship is not confined to the discipline of tourism studies, however. Authors such as Lucy Lippard, Laurie Beth Clark and Brigette Sion have sought to examine deathly tourism from humanities-based critical perspectives. Lippard describes the phenomenon as ‘tragic tourism’. With a focus on memorials, she suggests that sites of remembrance are ‘the battlegrounds in a life-and-death struggle between memory, denial and repression’ (119). Like James E. Young she expresses ambivalence about memorials that at once both keep past tragedies visible in the present and at the same time render their histories mute. Furthermore, she points out that while tourists might be comfortable seeking out distant and foreign tragedy, it is much more difficult to confront histories of violence and death that are closer to home (119). Laurie Beth Clark’s work employs the term, ‘trauma tourism’, which, for her, expresses the tension between the perceived ‘sacred’ quality of trauma and ‘profane’ aspect of deathly tourism. While defending tourism as ‘a “reasonable” response to traumatic histories’, Clark’s terminology touches upon the perceived moral or ethical distance between the histories memorialized and tourism’s approach, which seeks to endlessly replay the traumatic event. She writes: ‘as a culture we will endlessly be drawn back, again and again, to the sites of trauma until the underlying issue is resolved’ and suggests that the tension between desired closure on the one hand, and disclosure on the other, is ‘at the internally contradictory core of the practice of trauma tourism’. Brigette Sion’s forthcoming edited volume, Staging Violent Death: The Dark Performances of Thanatourism (2014), variously considers issues of memory, exhibition,
return and identity politics to unpack the phenomenon from an explicitly performance-based context. The work of these scholars is less interested in broad questions of ontology, as pursued by Stone and Sharpley, or heritage management, as discussed by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996), but rather with the social and political specificity of a particular kind of contemporary spectatorship as well as the aesthetic relationships that structure it.

As I sat at home and listened to Foley talk, a series of questions unfolded: why our attraction to dark pasts and tragic histories? What is it that we hope to see and understand at such sites? What are the moral and ethical obligations incurred through belated ‘bystanding’ and simulated engagement? There seemed to be a desire to connect, to be involved, to understand and to feel at these sites and, I felt, a sort of theatricality at play. I wondered why calamity might invite theatrical response. What kind of theatre was this? The examples above indicate a spectrum of modes of ‘attending’ to the past, from reverent acknowledgement to vicarious participation. How could such spectatorship be redeemed, I wondered, if at all? And why should I seek to redeem it? Because, I reflected, the kinds of sites that Foley described were precisely the sort of places that I was drawn to myself. My chance encounter with Foley’s interview was to lead to me on a long journey of enquiry that resulted in a series of travels, the writing of this book and a major stage work. My experiences as tourist, scholar and artist are all contained within this text.

### Evolution of memory

The theme of Dark Tourists – the growing trend for holidaymakers to seek out destinations of disaster, war, genocide or assassination [...] raises the question of whether this amounts to empathy or voyeurism.

(Bernadette Rae, ‘Ak07: Dark Tourists at the Aotea Centre’)

This is what I saw: miles of salt, a retreating sea, the last bird to leave... humans in piles, exhausted... a small white peace crane in a pocket, a bird on a shoulder... a swirling plastic house and an old rickety shed on wheels with four heads in the window... a transistor on a ladder that yearns to be cradled... a rag doll sunbathing, one bird squawking ‘I’m an endangered species!’ and his mate saying ‘Evolve! Evolve!’, a bird flying in formation with itself... a woman looking for the ‘spot where it happened’, then mauled with two hammers... brothers taking turns hanging in a plastic room, dying in
each others arms... a singing man, a bird being eaten, a side show... a bevy of falling coats, the dead being picked over... 3 women sun-bathers in a field of old coats... the ‘evolution of our memories’... a white paper bird in the palm of a headless hand.

(Lyne Pringle, ‘Ensemble Cast of Stars’)

My first response to dark tourism was not in fact this study, but a performance work called *Dark Tourists* (Auckland 2007, Wellington 2008; see Figures 0.1 and 0.2). I include a brief evocation of certain aspects of the work here as a backdrop against which to sketch out some of the book’s central concerns. Working as a co-director/dramaturge in collaboration with choreographer Malia Johnston and with a cast of dancers, actors and a musician, we began with a question that followed from the terrain Foley marked out: what is it that draws us to the suffering of others? We explored images of sites such as Auschwitz and also the more recent (at that time) images of bikini-clad sunbathers on the debris-strewn beaches of Thailand after the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. As much as we were interested in how we try to ‘get inside the skin’ of other people’s experience, we were also interested in the
Theatricality, Dark Tourism, Ethical Spectatorship

seeming disconnection between tourists and others’ suffering, which the Boxing Day images strikingly illustrated. More than being about loss, the work was about being at a loss. This was something I felt at many of the sites I visited – not the sadness that comes from seeing something profoundly moving, but rather the unease of not knowing how to respond. I was alone in almost all of my travels. I realized the importance of talking about what one has seen, recreating it in words – forging the distance that gives perspective – when I was not able to do so. Such uneasiness was reflected in the characters of Dark Tourists, who were marked by isolation, helplessness, loss and longing.

Whilst the theatre works to be discussed in later chapters are concerned with specific cultural traumas, Dark Tourists used dance, theatre and music to explore, at a more abstract level, the relationship that spectators forge with distant suffering. How does or should such suffering shape our subjectivity? The quality of the relationships that the characters in the work formed with the absent others who haunted it was distinctly ambivalent. Indeed, it is far easier to polemicize something like dark tourism – as either self-serving voyeurism or socially responsible witnessing – than it is to speak of its fraught, contingent and contradictory aspects. The image in Dark Tourists that perhaps best captures this ambivalence, and which is on the cover of this book, featured a dancer, naked but for a jacket, prone and arched backwards over a tall ladder. She was both a washed-up body – human debris – and at the same time, an outsider trying to understand the image by imitating it. The tableau was the culmination of a series of encounters between characters and what might be called ‘archival’ objects. The aforementioned dancer had already performed a scene with a pile of old shoes (Figure 0.1). Throughout the work, each of the performers had similarly vivid relationships with props, which were characterized by an emphasis on tactile engagement. They carefully picked up empty coats and tried them on, marking out movement phrases as if tracing a map of human history animated by the remains. These objects at once signified the absence of their previous owners as well as creating associations with the familiar images of shoes, suitcases, hair and so on, as are displayed at sites such as Auschwitz. Within the work both space and objects were responded to as if bodies. This produced a melancholy affect marked by a series of displacements: body from body, voice from body, body from space and body from history. In performance, the image of the dancer draped over the back of the ladder was a clear aestheticization of pain, lit to emphasize the form of the body, drawing particular attention to its structure, whilst at the same time highlighting its vulnerability. The
disturbing gesture was both a memorial act and an attempt to understand the other's experience through embodying it: or, as Freddie Rokem describes it, by inscribing history onto the body (‘On the Fantastic’ 50). But what knowledge might these acts of inscription produce?

In the first instance, such ‘re-presencing’ of history counters absence. Indeed, at most of the dark tourism sites discussed in this book it is absence that most potently ‘speaks’ to spectators. Through affecting or pretending a dialogical terrain where the dead are given affective presence, these sites activate a dramaturgy of spectral bodies. They show a consumed landscape that has borne, in Heiner Müller’s words, the ‘disappearance of Man’ (91), through invoking the disappeared (or exited), to whom we are asked to give our attention and acknowledgement. The ghosts summoned have a flickering quality; they appear and disappear, speak and are mute. Walking through Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide in Cambodia, for example, where there are so many photographs of the faces of former prisoners, one passes by some of them with little engagement, while others seem suddenly to cry out. They invite our contemplation whilst simultaneously pointing to a breach in our ability to understand. They ask us to bear the pain of this breach, to continue to turning towards them for every instance of
turning away. In *Dark Tourists*, bodies were caught in this interplay of appearance and disappearance, entering and exiting. In his discussion of postdramatic theatre, of which *Dark Tourists* might be considered an example, Hans-Thies Lehmann comments, ‘the figure of the other in theatre always has a reality only of *arrival*, not presence [...] we may call this essence of the theatrical figure its *representability’ (172). The image of someone who arrives, enters, but is not yet present – is in a continual state of arrival – is a dialectic that reflects the double movement of the spectator who turns towards, away from, and once again towards the face of the other. What Lehmann argues, as will I, is that it is theatricality – here meant as the affect of presence – that makes such alterity perceptible: ‘life never attains such a representation but in being articulated theatrically its “representability” appears’ (173). By way of its double movement, such theatricality exceeds the frame of conventional dramatic representation. In regard to dark tourism, it is the ‘always arriving and yet never present’ aspect of the bodies of the past, when successfully evoked, that makes them most powerful in the claim that they place upon us. Such an, ‘always arriving’ suggests the call of the other and its ceaseless aspect. What I propose throughout the book is that it is *theatricality* that often underpins such an affect of arrival. An ethics of spectatorship to such sites might be said to begin with the acknowledgment that, despite an arrival that is never completed, and a lack of presence, we are nonetheless located within a shared ethical space. That is, by our own emplacement – our appearance – we acknowledge our responsibility towards the disappeared, towards those who have exited. Furthermore by our presence we are dramaturgically implicated in the ethical and representational breaches that mark the sites. Near the end of *Dark Tourists*, a character who has survived a calamity evokes an image of tourists who have arrived in the aftermath:

They pluck the crusted ground for souvenirs. Leaving, their pinch of loss becomes bird in hand. New born, soft, jerking, wings are brushing the lines of their palms. My brother and I are watching. On the horizon one thousand birds slip through foreign salty fingers. Look how they take flight. It is the evolution of our memories.

The tourists appropriate and reinvent the remnants of history that they have sought out. Such imagined objects, delicate birds, are ethically fragile, as is all transmission of memory. In the cases that follow, both theatrical works and historical sites, I ask what we might make of the theatrical nature of our attempts to animate the past in order that we
might feel its force in the present. What kind of care do we need to take with memories that are not our own?

**Itinerary**

The chapters of this book, which provide a mapping of its ‘geographies of violence’, are organized around alternating discussion of tourism and theatre, which, where relevant, incorporates a personal voice by way of my reflections as traveller. These less formal notes are offered as both acknowledgment of the distance of my viewing position – cultural, geographical and generational – and as a way of allowing the affect of being a tourist to infiltrate the account. This is because, while the book considers spectatorship as a subject, I acknowledge the problems that arise from speaking of ‘the spectator’, or ‘the tourist’. Similarly ‘the audience’ is more an abstract idea than a concrete reality – an imagined singularity. My personal experiences of visiting sites and attending some of the works discussed are bought into contrast at times with other accounts. In so doing I hope to foreground the distinctions of experience from person to person. At the same time, I suggest that individual audience members and tourists, although marked by differing motivations, levels of engagement and experience, are finally enjoined, in most instances, in the collective (inasmuch as it happens concurrently) act of spectatorship. What is most important to me is the sense in which, as Levinas himself remarked, ‘the spectator is an actor’, meaning that spectatorship is in no way innocent or absolved of responsibility.

The first chapter ‘sets the scene’ for the journey that follows. It considers the scope and character of dark tourism, its theatrical aspects and the ethical questions that it generates. Subsequent chapters have a travelogue-like quality, moving from place to place, drawing on critical sources and personal reflection, and clustering discussions of ideas around those places. The itinerary spans a broad geographical terrain: Sachsenhausen, Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps in Europe, museums and memorials in Vietnam and Cambodia, sites in Rwanda, and a New Zealand example. Theatricality is examined at these sites in two ways. Firstly, I explore how each of them is staged and the ways in which tourists are invited to be audience to such staging. Secondly, and more importantly, I demonstrate what it is about these sites and their histories that motivates theatrical responses to them. I particularly focus on how the sites encourage affective attention through the invocation of absent voices, drawing on the sense in which Giorgio Agamben suggests that, ‘in the non-place of the Voice stands not writing, but the
witness’ (*Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* 130). That is, as suggested above, memorials invoke the ghosts of witnesses who are imagined to press their claims upon visitors.

Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz and Dachau are the first sites considered. These former concentration and labour camps variously represent those who died through a combination of archival objects and architecture, accompanied by both verbal and written narrative commentary. The memorials evoke a sense of place and heighten this affect by positioning archival objects as surrogate witnesses who testify to the past. In staging their histories, the sites ask visitors to participate as attentive audience members who are willing to listen. War tourism in Vietnam offers a rather less reverential version of memorialization. Whilst Vietnamese loss is foremost in the accounts of the museums and attractions on offer, the tension between this grave historical record and vestiges of the popularization of the War in American culture generates an odd sense of kitsch. At Cu Chi, for example, tourists are invited to crawl through Viet Cong tunnels and to shoot rifles. This is a kind of interactive dramatization of history where tourists are encouraged to ‘play a part’. The deeply sombre Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide and nearby Choeung Ek (also known as ‘The Killing Fields’) in Cambodia, offers a stark contrast to the Vietnamese examples. In room after room, the Museum displays headshots of those admitted to the prison and who died there. The plaintive faces of those tortured at the prison are all the more poignant for *not* showing the pain that would follow their being photographed. They show us an image of the human at the very moment of having their humanity denied.

The Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori tourist performance, *Lost in Our Own Land*, is the most explicit example of the intertwining of theatre and tourism given in the book. The three-hour spectacle restaged a colonial era conflict known as the Musket Wars. The performance, in place of the more common hāngi and haka culture show, put on stage the pain provoked by colonial settlement and made the argument for its continuing effects in the present. At Murambi Genocide Memorial Centre in Rwanda, close to a thousand lime-preserved bodies of the dead (of the many thousands who were murdered at what was formerly a school) are laid out as visceral evidence of genocidal violence. That those who died are both present and absent gives the memorial its powerful charge. In examining Murambi I reflect upon the significant distinctions between such affectively arresting displays and theatrical performances, and discuss the limitations and ethical problems of making memorial objects themselves ‘perform’.
The theatrical performances, brought into relation with the histories and sites considered collectively, offer rich material for examining explicitly theatrical responses to the representation of experiences considered variously unrepresentable and unknowable. I discuss a number of works in relationship to memorialization of the holocaust: Jerzy Grotowski’s *Akropolis* (1962–67); Charlotte Delbo’s involvement in a performance of Molière’s *The Hypochondriac*, staged by prisoners interned in one of Auschwitz’s satellite camps; artist Artur Žmijewski’s video work 80064 (2004); and a recent experimental production of Peter Weiss’s *The Investigation* (2010), performed in the Congress Hall on the Nazi party rally grounds in Nuremberg. The works’ distinctive characters underline an important argument in the book, which is that it is not a particular theatrical aesthetic that might be considered most ethical, but that the ethical aspect of theatre can be located in its responsive character. Indeed, Delbo’s staging of Molière demonstrates the power of a conventional dramatic text staged in an unconventional setting.

In my discussion of War tourism in Vietnam I focus in particular on my guided tour of Cu Chi. Alongside this account I consider two meta-theatrical dramas: Adrienne Kennedy’s *An Evening with Dead Essex* (1973) and Jackie Sibblies Drury’s *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884–1915* (2012). Kennedy’s play concerns a director and group of actors rehearsing a docu-drama about a real historical figure, African-American former US Marine, Mark Essex, who gunned down nine people in the early 1970s. While he never served in Vietnam, his killings were strongly associated with the anti-War movement. Sibblies Drury’s play about the colonial genocide of the Herero people employs a similar metatheatrical device to Kennedy’s and shows a group of young actors trying to figure out both how to tell the history of the Herero and to reflect on what it means for them in the present. The absences that the plays mark are doubled: Essex and the Herero are both absent from the stage and from the broader historical record. In both plays theatrical alterity creates a similarly doubled effect where the distinctions between actor and role, on-stage and off-stage are destabilized in order to unsettle the certainties of the audience. I suggest that such deliberate unsettlement also marks certain tourist activities, drawing upon my Cu Chi tour to illustrate this.

In response to the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide in Cambodia I discuss two works. Catherine Filloux’s one-act play, *Photographs from S–21* (1998) imagines two of the photographs’ subjects come to life after a day of being looked at by visitors. Through dramatizing the famous
images, Filloux foregrounds the out-of-frame ghosts that haunt them, interrogating the relationship between seen, unseen and spectator. Rithy Panh’s documentary, *S21: Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003), brings together former Tuol Sleng workers – guards, torturers and a photographer – with two former victims. The film emphasizes the affect of the Tuol Sleng building through a highly theatrical attention to the relationship between artefacts and historical actors, and incorporates haunting sequences in which guards, from memory, re-enact their former duties. The documentary movingly demonstrates the difficulty of reversing historical strategies of violent effacement. Both works juxtapose what Diana Taylor describes as ‘archive and repertoire’ and I ask what meaning is generated when the imperatives of each come into conflict with one another.

Because *Lost in Our Land* is itself a theatrical work, albeit performed within the context of cultural tourism, the comparative performance examples are framed somewhat differently than in other chapters. I refer in brief to a broad range of theatrical and dance performances including: Rore Hapipi’s *Death of the Land* (1976), Hone Kouka’s *Waïora* (1996), Lemi Ponifasio’s early presentation of *Tempest* in 2007, and *Te Houhi* (2011), a dancetheatre choreographed by Maakaa Pepene for Māori contemporary dance company Atamira. My emphasis in reference to these works is on how issues concerning the relationship between land, self-determination and sovereignty are expressed through the manipulation of theatrical space and I ask how effectively incorporation of audiences into specifically Māori spaces challenges spectators.

In *Maria Kizito* (2008), American writer, Erik Ehn, attempts to allow us to ‘be with’ former Catholic nun, Maria (qtd. in Edmondson, 70). Kizito was found guilty of complicity in the murder of hundreds of victims who sought refuge in the monastery at Sovu during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Ehn’s play uses a poetic structure to balance the evocation of Kizito’s thinking with the voices of those who gave testimony at the trial. By moving between different theatrical styles that variously shift the audience from insider to outsider perspectives, Ehn interrogates what it means to be a bystander in a world in which violence such as Kizito’s is not only carried out, but also known about and watched. In focusing on a perpetrator of violence, Ehn asks of his audience a different kind of identificatory relationship than that formed through watching an account of a survivor’s story, and I consider what is distinct about this from an ethical perspective.

Within and between each of the book’s chapters, sites and performance works are bought into relation with one another as a way of examining
the role of the spectator and analysing the theatrical strategies employed for acknowledging loss. The two sets of examples are not so much compared to one another as used to demonstrate a similar theatrical responsiveness, which occurs across a range of examples. Theatricality is understood, as Samuel Weber puts it, as a ‘medium’, which I suggest is characterized by a dialectic of absence and presence. It is foremost in this sense that the word ‘theatrical’ is applied to the analysis of memorial sites. In regard to theatre, theatricality is used to denote the affective particularity of the performances described – the meaning that is generated by their ‘liveness’. In some cases I draw on my own experiences as spectator, in others I am drawn to speculate based on archival materials. Such representations, theatrical and tourist, at their most ethical, fulfil a complex function: they ensure that the unrepresentable does not disappear, by paradoxically demonstrating its very unrepresentability. These representations do not show us the past as much as make evident the distance between that past and the present of the spectator. Alain Resnais remarked of his cinematic responses to Auschwitz (Night and Fog) and Hiroshima (Hiroshima Mon Amour) that ‘what has to be filmed is the impossibility of filming it’, explaining ‘I came to see that all you could do was suggest the horror, that if you tried to somehow show something very real on the screen, the horror disappeared so I had to use every means possible to set the viewer’s imagination in motion’ (Resnais). Freddie Rokem, with particular reference to Holocaust theatre, similarly states that such performances should ‘make it possible for the “naïve” [spectator] to understand, and at the same time show that he or she probably never really will’ (‘On the Fantastic in Holocaust Performances’ 41).

The ethical claim that the absent other makes upon us inhabits a kind of ‘audible silence’, its terms are inassimilable and yet it requires a very real response. It is in the dialectic tension that arises from this positioning of the spectator as audience to the unspeakable that I suggest a point of ethics emerges. This ethics is affective and theatrical in character, and calls for an embodied attention to silence, suggesting that from such attention, the distant voices of absent others may be ‘heard.’ I am also particularly interested in the distinction that Lisa Fitzpatrick in her discussion of the relationship between theatrical witness and an ethics of spectatorship makes between knowledge and action: knowledge as ‘communicated to the spectator, by the performance’, and action as ‘by the spectator, in response to the performance’ (59). Need measurable actions be taken in order for the act of spectatorship to be thought of as ethical? What forms might such action take? Might the work of the figure Jacques Rancière calls the ‘emancipated spectator’, whose action
is as ‘translator’ (The Emancipated Spectator 13) of the experience they encounter, be considered as ethical?

To expand upon the idea of ethics in relation to spectatorship, both tourist and theatrical, I introduce the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Aspects of Levinas’s work, such as face-to-face encounter, alterity, saying and said, and substitution invite theatrical comparison, and I suggest that such comparison can be used to consider the ethical dimensions of the examples discussed. In this regard my analysis builds upon work in the field of theatre and ethics by Nicholas Ridout (2009), James Thompson (2009), Helena Grehan (2009), Jon Erickson (1999) and Alice Rayner (1993), and in particular takes up Erickson’s suggestion that the theatrical event may provide a series of substitutive ‘faces’ that have ethical force (13). In doing so I give attention to the concepts of mimesis and identification, which are explored in relation to acts of political, ethical and moral imagination. Laura Cull has discussed the problems of programmatically applying philosophical frameworks to the interpretation of performance and urges that scholars go ‘beyond application’ (23). This project concurs with Cull’s basic argument; indeed, Levinas’s scepticism regarding artistic practices makes any wholesale application of his ethical framework untenable. Absent Others neither seeks to prove the theatricality of Levinas, nor that dark tourism might fit within a Levinasian paradigm. Rather, Levinas provides an important ethical backdrop against which issues of responsibility generally, and theatrical responsiveness in particular, are examined. The urgency in his claims continues to provide valuable provocation in a global environment within which a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others, regardless of social or political contexts, is sorely lacking. As Grehan notes, ‘Levinasian ethics moves the focus from the subject to the other, and demands that the subject responds to the other’ (19). In the cases discussed, this requires an imagination (or perceived invocation) of the absent other, which is where Levinas’s philosophy useful. The analysis that follows brings theatricality and Levinas’s ideas into conversation with one another in order to show that a theatrical analysis inflected by Levinas’s thinking is able to effectively illustrate what is at stake within the examples of spectatorship.

While the ethical ideals of Levinas form a backdrop to the book’s discussion, his philosophy is set in contrast with other approaches to thinking through the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. At the outset Jacques Rancière’s challenge to ‘the ethical turn’ is considered. Rancière has fiercely critiqued what he terms as ‘the endless
work of mourning’ played out in pervasive testimonial aesthetics that are grounded in economies of unrepresentability (Dissensus 200). He rejects the account of the ethical turn as a humanist practice of resistance enacted by holding to account the political and aesthetic: that is, by judging such practices based on the concept of moral value. Instead, for Rancière, the discourse of contemporary ethics emerges from, and is practised in service of, the normalization of political violence – from a rhetoric of ‘infinite justice’ (187). Where Levinas’s arguments are deeply philosophical, Rancière’s are politically engaged and in this sense help to provide a framework for identifying the values in operation, aesthetic and political, in terms of both the sites discussed and works considered. The distinctive takes on ethics by Levinas and Rancière are just one of a series of ‘oppositions’ staged throughout the book. The central dialectic is that of absence and presence, which is considered both in relation to theatrical performance and tourist experience. Other pairs or dialectics include: voice and silence, affect and intellect, representation and the unrepresentable, mimesis and the ‘withdrawal of representation’ (Lehmann 172), ghosts and archives. Considered together these form an undulating landscape, marked by doing and undoing in equal measure, whose horizon shimmers with the limit point that Butler describes. To write of the unrepresentable and to speak of the unknowable other is to be always already compromised. One is drawn to speculate, to dance around the edges of things, and to rely on substitutes. In this sense, the quest of the book mirrors the spectatorship that is its subject.

As the text unfolds I employ various lenses to scrutinize this spectatorship: Paul Ricouer’s discussion of mimesis, Diana Taylor’s distinction between archive and repertoire, Alice Rayner’s meditation on theatrical ghosts, Rebecca Schneider’s exploration of re-enactment, Matthew Reason’s discussion of archives, and Jerzy Grotowski’s theatrical philosophy, amongst others, variously inform the accounts given. In its interdisciplinary focus on spectatorship, the book positions itself as a response to recent interest in the relationship between human rights, creativity, and the role of critical and aesthetic theory in addressing ideologies of violence. It is also a reply to Helena Grehan’s call for continuing work in the area of exchange between performance, spectatorship and ethics (8). By applying a theatrical analysis that spans both aesthetic performances and tourist sites, the interdisciplinary study presents a case for the role that theatre has to play within cultural practices concerned with the fragility of the human, with a particular emphasis on theatrical imagination.
Otherwise

The histories memorialized by both tourist sites and performance works are indictments of human failure. They provide examples of the denial of the most fundamental rights of existence on so large a scale that entire societies are implicated in the enactments of violence. These histories are not aberrations, but rather extreme examples of endemic violence that has in fact become normalized within discourses of nationhood, justice and, paradoxically, within claims for the right to exist. Scholarship that is able to span different disciplines and social spheres, in order to address the most pressing challenges that face us in articulating a renewed vision of ‘global citizenship’ that counters such violence, is critical. This book is but one small contribution to this work; however, I hope that it adds to the efforts to secure the future of humanities as critic and conscience, whose collective insights both hold to account those forces that seek to deny the value of human life, and at the same time dare to imagine a society that is otherwise.
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