

# Displaced Heritage

Responses to Disaster,  
Trauma, and Loss



Edited by Ian Convery, Gerard Corsane  
and Peter Davis



The International Centre For  
Cultural & Heritage Studies  
Newcastle University

HERITAGE MATTERS

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DISPLACED HERITAGE

RESPONSES TO DISASTER, TRAUMA, AND LOSS

## HERITAGE MATTERS

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Heritage Matters is a series of edited and single-authored volumes which addresses the whole range of issues that confront the cultural heritage sector as we face the global challenges of the twenty-first century. The series follows the ethos of the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University, where these issues are seen as part of an integrated whole, including both cultural and natural agendas, and thus encompasses challenges faced by all types of museums, art galleries, heritage sites and the organisations and individuals that work with, and are affected by them.

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# Displaced Heritage

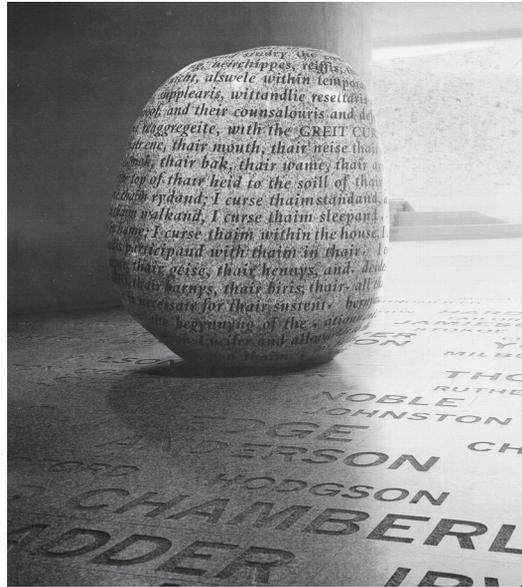
Responses to Disaster, Trauma, and Loss

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Edited by

IAN CONVERY, GERARD CORSANE

AND PETER DAVIS



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*Photo: Sarah Elliott*

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© *Ellie Land*

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*Alan Russell*

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Ian Convery, University of Cumbria  
Gerard Corsane, Newcastle University  
Peter Davis, Newcastle University

# Abbreviations

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ARD	asbestos-related diseases
ASL	above sea level
BMN	Balkans Museums Network
BSE	bovine spongiform encephalopathy
bTB	bovine tuberculosis
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CHwB	Cultural Heritage without Borders
COTS	Crown of Thorns starfish
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ECGD	Export Credits Guarantee Department
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EU	European Union
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
FUW	Farmers' Union of Wales
GBR	Great Barrier Reef
GBRMPA	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GMB	General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union
GNP	Gorongosa National Park
HEP	hydro-electric power
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HPSEB	Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board
IAPA	'intensive action' pilot area
ICCHS	International Centre for Cultural & Heritage Studies, Newcastle University
ICJB	International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal
ICOM	International Council of Museums
iDTR	Institute for Dark Tourism Research, University of Central Lancashire
IICT	Indian Institute of Chemical Technology
ISG	Independent Scientific Group
IST	Indian Standard Time
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti
KMT	Kuomintang
KOCB	Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MIC	methyl isocyanate
MLK PDU	Maze/Long Kesh Programme Delivery Unit
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NGO	non-governmental organisation

NLM	National Lithuanian Museum
PAC	Pembrokeshire Against the Cull
PKK	Partiya Karkarên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
POST	Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology
POW	prisoner of war
PRC	People's Republic of China
PUMAH	Planning, Urban Management and Heritage
RENAMO	Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana
ROSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
RRC	Regional Restoration Camps
SIB	Strategic Investment Board Limited
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
SOHC	Scottish Oral History Centre Archive, University of Strathclyde
SQPV	squirrel poxvirus
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TOI	Times of India
TVBS	Television Broadcasts Satellite
UCC	Union Carbide Corporation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WCD	World Commission on Dams
WEIRD	Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic
WHO	World Health Organization
WILD	Women's International Leadership Development
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union



# Preface

---

KAI ERIKSON

I have been asked to provide a brief foreword to this collection of chapters: not to introduce the contents of what is to follow but to offer ‘a personal reflective account of working with disasters that can help position their place in human experience’. I was offered this honour because I happen to have spent the past 40 years visiting scenes of disaster and writing about them. At the risk of appearing to open with a mindless personal travelogue, then, I propose to provide a brief sampling of those places – in rough chronological order – as I have on other occasions.

A coal mining valley in West Virginia known as Buffalo Creek, where a winter flood, caused by a faulty impoundment, caused a terrifying amount of damage to the people living downstream.

An Ojibwa Indian Reserve in Northwest Ontario, Canada, where a mercury spill that had taken place many miles upstream entered the waterways along which the natives had lived, and from which they had drawn sustenance, since the beginning of their reckoning of time. They viewed those waters as a living thing and called the alien substance that had insinuated its way into them ‘pijibowin’, Ojibwa for poison. This shook not only the native economy profoundly but also the native way of life, leaving them with what their wise young chief called ‘a broken culture’.

A nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania called Three Mile Island, where a near meltdown resulted in unexpected levels of dread on the part of people who lived in its shadow. By the standards of the time, that reaction appeared puzzling and even ‘irrational’, but it became apparent before long that it was the standards, not the human reaction, that failed the test of reason.

A migrant farm worker camp in South Florida, where a large group of numbingly poor migrants from Haiti discovered that the money they had earned working the fields – money their families back home had counted on for everyday survival – had simply been stolen.

Native villages along the coasts of Alaska where the seas from which people had extracted their living for centuries had been blackened and polluted for a thousand miles by a gigantic oil spill. It began as a threat to the native fishery in ways that go far beyond easy calculation, and ended as a threat to their very culture – already a way of life made more fragile by the Russians and then the Americans who had moved into their homeland.

A town in the Western Slavonia region of Croatia, where the townspeople were almost equally divided between ethnic Serbs and Croats, and where close to half the marriages conducted in the last 50 years had been between a Croat and a Serb. The town became a scene of violent civil war at the time of the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The

physical landscape was badly damaged by the tides of war, but that was no more than a surface layer of wreckage. The *human* landscape was even more sharply disrupted, in ways both visible and invisible. Whole neighbourhoods, even families, were split apart as sharply as crystals struck by a hammer.

A remote atoll in Micronesia that had been visited more than half a century earlier by a huge cloud of radioactive fallout, the result of an above-ground nuclear test in Bikini, many miles away. In the years since, an unusual number of ailments have been discovered there of the sort known to be related to radioactivity, although the islanders knew little about that, and a dark sense of uneasiness soon worked its way into the very fabric of local culture, affecting the way people viewed themselves, the way they raised children, and the way they measured their own abilities and strengths.

And, finally, the Gulf region of the United States, including the celebrated city of New Orleans, where a tropical storm with the fetching name of 'Katrina' moved across a broad stretch of terrain, doing harm to everything in its path – and, in a way, reaching out to people all over the world through the attention it managed to attract. As we approach the 10th anniversary of Katrina, it is more than reasonable to declare that the storm is still raging.

This is quite an assortment of horrors: a flood, mercury contamination, a nuclear emergency, an act of larceny, an oil spill, a civil war, radioactive fallout and a fierce hurricane. And they touch the lives of a rich assortment of peoples: coal miners from the mountains of Appalachia, native hunters and trappers from subarctic Canada, townsfolk from central Pennsylvania, migrant farm workers from Haiti, native fishers along the hard coasts of Alaska, South Slavs from what was once Yugoslavia, Micronesian islanders on a remote speck of land out in the South Pacific, and those still reeling persons who live – or once lived – in New Orleans and along the Gulf coast of the United States. This assortment does not reach across as wide a range as this volume does either culturally or geographically, of course, but it will be my warrant for speaking in generalities.

My invitation is to speak of what I think I have learned over those years of study, and I have to begin with what should be obvious – that my 'knowledge' is formed in part by my time in the field, but it owes a far greater debt to the work of colleagues following the same pursuit, including several whose work is represented in this volume. I will be speaking of these conclusions as if they were established *findings*, but they should be understood as *questions*: things to ponder as we continue our inquiry into the nature of catastrophic events.

Most of us have approached disasters over the years taking it more or less for granted that they can be divided into 'natural' and 'human-made' categories. The difference seems evident on its face. It is becoming ever more clear, however, that the closer one looks at the distinction, the more blurred it becomes. Tsunamis and earthquakes and similar disturbances seem to leap into the flow of life out of nowhere as they strike the human settlements in their path, and they are clearly of natural origin. But what makes those events 'disastrous' has less to do with their ferocity than what lies before them. An earthquake registering at the very top of the Richter Scale – a tremendous force of nature – will not be called a 'disaster' in the evening news if it hits an empty island in the South Seas and does no harm to human habitation. It will not even be called 'news'. Something ranking as a disaster, then, is a collision between a natural or a human-made event of some kind and a site shaped by human hands. It is what those hands built and not what nature wrought that makes of that collision a disaster.

Voltaire once noted that the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was an act of nature, and he received a well-known rebuke from Rousseau: 'Admit ... that nature did not construct twenty thousand houses of six to seven stories there and that if the inhabitants of this great city had been more equally spread out and more lightly lodged, the damage would have been much less and perhaps of no account' (Masters and Kelly 1992 [1756], 110). (The argument Rousseau was making took him elsewhere, but the point remains valid.) We are in the habit of naming disasters for the events that brought them to attention. We know the day, the hour, the minute that the tsunami hit the shore or the earthquake made itself felt or the waters began to rise or the dam collapsed. But more often than not, when we draw attention to a disaster by naming it or by locating it in time we are in effect marking the moment it became news, the moment it became widely noticed, and not necessarily the moment that specialists, looking back, would cite as the real starting point of the trouble. Katrina offers a striking example. The city of New Orleans was devastated by an assault known by everyone as 'Katrina', but the irony is that the winds of that hurricane had abated and its surging waters had slipped back meekly into the Gulf before the first hints of damage appeared in the city itself. In a very real sense, the real disaster did not even begin in New Orleans until 'Katrina' had disappeared from the radar.

How then should we date the appearance of that disaster? By the day the levees failed? By the day the decision was taken to build levees as a way of fending off inconvenient natural processes? In some other way?

Once we find ourselves looking backward in time to moments well before the official beginning of a disaster, we sometimes learn, as Anthony Oliver-Smith did in his study of what he aptly identified as 'Peru's Five-Hundred Year Earthquake', that its true origins are to be found far back in the course of history. Katrina, again, offers a good example.

If we were to ask thoughtful persons from New Orleans how that terrible event came to be, we are quite likely to hear about the building of the city's levees; earlier decisions to cut canals through that urban space, making the levees necessary; hidden distinctions of race and class that have cut other lines through social space; and so on. And if we reach far enough into that past, the collapse of the levees at the time of Katrina can be understood as the end point in a continuing sequence as readily as it can the beginning point in a new one.

The same would be the case if we were to confer with persons who lived along the Gulf coast and were exposed to a quite different facet of that complex disaster. They were hit hard by the winds and waters of the hurricane directly, and for them it was a straightforward storm – a natural occurrence of the kind they knew the look and feel of from long experience. But they, too, look back now and realise that those raging waters reached them as quickly and as cruelly as they did because the land they live on and once counted on to cushion them from the storms of the Gulf had not only been entirely reshaped but vastly diminished by human efforts to outwit the forces of nature and to extract its riches quickly.

So it can be difficult to know when to date the beginning of a calamitous event, and it is just as difficult to know how to date its end. The social and behavioural sciences are rich with schemes tracing the 'stages' of a disaster, the final one, almost inevitably, being something called 'recovery'. To use a term like that is to suggest that victims have been restored to their original state and have been able to return to their former lives. I will not go into that in any detail as I bring these brief remarks to a close, but I will share my doubt that this actually happens very often. Most survivors, we have reason to know, find ways to stabilise and carry on and take a place in everyday social life. But they have been changed by the experience, and they look out

at the world through eyes that can be sadder and wiser, as the old expression goes. The sadness comes from realising how grim and how unforgiving life can sometimes be. The wisdom comes from knowing things that the rest of us can only guess at, and I have long felt that we should be taking advantage of that wisdom. It is difficult to think of anyone better qualified to serve as the teachers and the healers of fellow human beings who come to find themselves in similar straits. It would be good for patient and healer alike.

But that is an aside. The main point I want to make is that a disaster cannot be understood fully as a discrete event. In order to get a sense of its true dimensions, we have to allow it to settle back into the larger flow of history, and then study what happened before and what happened – or is happening – afterwards.

And that may be as good a place as any for a discussion of the impact of disasters on heritage – natural, cultural and intangible – and on the processes and practices of memorialisation, to begin.

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# Introduction

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IAN CONVERY, GERARD CORSANE AND PETER DAVIS

## INTRODUCTION

Disasters, whether they are natural or caused by people, change the environment and ‘displace’ heritage resources. They can be dramatic natural impacts such as tsunami and volcanic eruptions, or terrible events unleashed by humankind, including holocaust and genocide. Sometimes disasters are more insidious, such as the logging of rainforests for short-term gain, or elevated sea temperatures, possibly linked to global climate change, that result in thermal stress and bleach coral ecosystems; these may be slower events but their impact is still hugely significant. Disasters can be high-impact events or occur on a small, localised scale. Whether natural or human-made, rapid or slow, great or small, the impact is effectively the same; nature, people and cultural heritage are displaced or lost.

What constitutes ‘disaster’? At first this might seem a fairly straightforward question, but ‘disaster’ eludes simple definition, or as Philip Buckle (2007) puts it, defining disaster is never easy and rarely definitive. Indeed, the word disaster is so frequently used in everyday dialogue, from misplaced house keys to major events such as earthquakes and hurricanes, as to be almost meaningless (Convery *et al* 2008). This ubiquity is problematic, and as López-Ibor (2005) notes, in academic disciplines it is almost impossible to find an acceptable definition of a disaster. The term originates from the unfavourable aspect of a star, from the French *désastre* or Italian *disastro*, and suggests that when the stars are poorly aligned, unfortunate things are likely to happen; the implication is that disastrous events are outside human control. Indeed, disasters may still be viewed as ‘events from the physical environment... caused by forces which are unfamiliar’ (López-Ibor 2005, 2) and frequently unforeseen.

Nesmith (2006, 59) writes that the word disaster has many synonyms that add conceptual significance to the term in communicating misery, death, destruction, helplessness, sudden reversal of what is expected and unhappy resolutions to distressing events. She provides a set of defining characteristics:

- Event that disrupts the health of and occurs to a collective unit of a society or community
- The event overwhelms available resources and requires outside assistance for management and mitigation
- Represents tremendous relative human losses
- Negative impact event of natural, financial, technologic, or human origin, for example, armed conflict
- Represents a breakdown in the relationship between humans and the environment

Disasters can therefore take many forms, but what links together all the above is the notion that, whatever form an event might take, it becomes a disaster when the resulting situation

exceeds our human ability to recover (Convery *et al* 2008). This broad definition of disaster has been adopted by many international agencies and NGOs. For example, The World Health Organization (2002) states that a 'disaster is any event that exceeds the capacity of individuals or communities affected to alleviate their suffering or meet their needs without outside assistance'. The United Nations Development Programme (2004, 136) also highlights a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread 'human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of those affected to cope'. Similarly, Blaikie *et al's* (1994, 21) influential book *At Risk* highlights that disasters occur when a 'significant number of vulnerable people experience a hazard and suffer severe damage and/or disruption of their livelihood system in such a way that recovery is unlikely without external aid'. Even with external aid, disasters may have significant impacts on the living conditions, economic performance and environmental assets and services of affected areas (UN/ECLAC 2003). Consequences may be long-term and may even irreversibly affect economic and social structures and the environment.

While disasters often tend to have a specific focal point, they are not completely discrete events. Their possibility of occurrence, time, place and severity can often be predicted in advance and is likely to link to events elsewhere. As O'Keefe and Middleton (1998) indicate, there are ambiguities in the ways in which disasters are identified, and while some natural events may act as a trigger for disaster, economic, social and political factors also play an important role. Similarly, Hearn and Deeny (2007) argue that many of the world's disasters are now complex emergencies because they include a multiplicity of problems such as war, ethnic conflict, famine, endemic diseases and political unrest.

Yet at the same time the impact of disasters is highly situated; they occur in locales that have their own very distinctive cultural and natural heritage resources. As McLean and Johnes (2000) indicate, disasters are embedded within specific socio-economic, historical, cultural and chronological contexts. While heritage is at risk from disasters, in time sites of suffering are sometimes reframed as sites of memory; through this different lens these 'difficult' places become heritage sites and even attract tourists. Disasters can also make us better informed about the heritage we have lost, or are losing, leading to attempts to better preserve what remains by creating new mechanisms to recognise and protect natural and cultural heritage resources. Disasters and catastrophic events can be seen as 'happenings' that entangle people, place and their heritage, and disasters and displacement can leave people overcome by a 'loss of self' and a 'loss of place'. Particularly at risk of displacement are the cultural and natural capital assets of communities and their place; both forms of capital can be deeply affected. Material culture – buildings, objects, possessions – is a vital element in the framing of people's identities; similarly nature makes a deep psychological contribution to our construction of identity and place (Clayton and Opotow 2003). While the intangible cultural heritage of a community might be considered as less at risk from catastrophe, in extreme cases the loss of culture bearers, or dramatic shifts in society, can result in the loss of these heritage assets. For example, Onciul's chapter in this volume (Chapter 16) deals with events which changed forever the lives of Native American peoples and impacted on their intangible cultural heritage.

Harada's (2000) view that 'individuality makes sense only in a social context ... we construct ourselves and we are constructed both "socially" or "individually" in space and with relations with the materials' chimes with these reflections on the intangible nature of place, society and heritage. When familiar spaces, situations and materials are changed, we are forced to reconsider our social and individual relations. Harada argues that sociality is made up out of the material

objects which people use and which surround them in daily life. Disasters can reorder meaning, and 'things' can either become out of place, out of proportion or lost altogether during disasters. As Convery *et al* (2008) note, everyday objects, materials, tools and spaces take on heightened significance, become transformed or enlarged into resonant materials which carry traumatic associations, even agency. Objects collected during times of trauma can evoke strong responses and trigger reminiscence, a fact that museum educators use not just to educate but to encourage healing and closure. Museums, through their object collections and educational activities, can bring an important lens to the significance and power of 'things': materials, artefacts, places, buildings and events can come together to demonstrate the relationship between material order and social meaning and to reflect upon and manage the memories of crisis. Most museums in the UK offer a 'reminiscence service', allowing local people to recall, value, share and preserve their personal memories; while not all of them attempt to deal with traumatic events, 'reminiscence boxes' – particularly those relating to periods such as World War II – often contain objects that trigger emotional responses. Northern Ireland's 'Reminiscence Network' ([www.rnni.org.uk](http://www.rnni.org.uk)), a consortium of Education and Library Services, Museums, Health and Social Services, Sheltered Housing, Churches and Community Groups, has very specific programmes (and helpful bibliographies for reminiscence providers), which deal with Northern Ireland's 'Troubles', truth-telling and reconciliation. Museums' active collecting of artefacts associated with traumatic events is now regarded as a vital aspect of curatorial practice, as discussed by Besley and Were (Chapter 4, this volume).

Hetherington and Munro (1997, 197) note that places – in the discussions in this book these include museums, galleries and heritage sites – have the effect of 'folding of spaces, times and materials together into complex topographical arrangements that perform a multitude of differences'. We are aware that objects can act as important emotional triggers; similarly photography can provide a 'cultural shock' that links the local to wider society, and extends some understanding of the trauma to others 'outside' the disaster (Ashmore 2013; see also Chapter 23, this volume). Writing in relation to an exhibition of images detailing the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic in the UK, Ashmore writes that when these landscape images have been exhibited, comments reveal that they have been effective vehicles for conveying the trauma of Foot and Mouth to those people affected and an outside audience alike. Landscape imagery can thus communicate the traumatic human experience of a changed 'lifescape' and is actually essential to understanding the traumatic experience of a crisis which happened within, and to, the landscape.

The management of *place* post-disaster is frequently difficult and complex. Convery *et al* (2008) argue that the ability to recognise the new identities and resonances taken on by objects and places in disasters is vitally important. Commemorating and recording disasters, *in situ*, is important. The work of museums and heritage agencies can provide a different lens to view disasters; it enables us to see beyond the initial event and view them as happenings that entangled the local and the global, the historic and the future, continuity and dramatic change; however, it is important that specificity of place is regarded as paramount. In some instances, it is important for *place* to be left intact. This is evidenced in holocaust sites such as Auschwitz (Poland) and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (Cambodia); disaster sites such as the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal (India); or places of internment such as Robben Island (South Africa) or the Maze Prison (Northern Ireland). By maintaining these sites they can function not just as reminders of dreadful events and difficult pasts but also as a means of deterrence (Stone 2011).

At other times there are compelling reasons to remove the evidence of disasters and consequently change physical places. One such example is the site of the 1966 Aberfan disaster in which 144 people were killed, 116 of them children, buried when a coal waste-tip engulfed the village school. Following extensive site restoration, Portland and Nabresina stone memorials were erected in Aberfan cemetery, accompanied by archways and a memorial garden. These original memorials were replaced in 2007 by the Aberfan Memorial Charity, using polished Pearl White granite; re-engraving of all inscriptions and the erection of additional archways created a site of continuing remembrance. The concept of gardens as memorials has been taken a step further in the National Memorial Arboretum (Staffordshire, England); planting began in 1997 and the site now acts as a special place to honour men and women who have served in the armed forces, police, fire and rescue and ambulance services. It is not a cemetery but a peaceful and beautiful place to remember and reflect.

Whether retaining traumatic sites intact or creating new forms of memorial (and hence changing places), the notion of creating a place to reflect on hardship, disaster and loss is one of the most difficult areas for heritage, museum and tourism professionals to manage successfully. Their actions have the potential to result in understanding, commemoration and deterrence, but care must be taken to consult, listen and respond to local communities – those who have suffered the trauma – at every stage of the process. In any disaster situation, affected communities need the opportunity to regain some control of their own lives, personal spaces and collective space; they must be regarded as essential contributors to recording, remembering and commemorating disaster events. The importance of community response is also noted by Bakker *et al* (2005, 808), who state that the ‘lives of citizens are enhanced by, and indeed inseparable from, the construction of collectivities’ (consisting of humans, materials and agency). The development of such relationships is clearly important in terms of empowering people to act during a disaster, but also, we would argue, in assisting remembrance and commemoration, post disaster.

Keiffer (2013) notes that the process of remembering highlights the progress made, but also how much we still have to learn about the impact of disasters. This book is therefore timely because of the rapidly developing interest in disasters and their connections to place and heritage. While a number of books have been written about heritage and sense of place, few have considered these issues in relation to disasters, trauma and suffering. The contributors selected for this collection all work within the arena of heritage, sense of place, disasters and sites of suffering, and cover a wide range of disciplines. All are keen to be involved in exploring and theorising the links between disasters, trauma, displacement, human suffering, heritage and place. Most importantly, they all see the need for an edited collection which draws together these issues – exploring both theory and practice – into a single volume. The book includes the views of academics, practitioners and writers from heritage and museum studies, sociology, history, geography, disaster studies, health and the arts.

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Displaced Heritage:  
Histories and Tourism



# Dark Tourism and Dark Heritage: Emergent Themes, Issues and Consequences

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CATHERINE ROBERTS AND PHILIP R STONE

## INTRODUCTION

The ways in which societies (re)present death, dying and their dead has long been symbiotic with particular cultural representations of mortality. These representations are often bound up with heritage and tourism, whereby travelling to meet with the dead has long been a feature of the touristic landscape. Examples of early travel to sites of death and the dead can be found in medieval pilgrimages and their reliquary associations, or in Grand Tour visitations to tombs and petrified ruins of the ancient world, or in touristic visits to deceased authors' homes, haunts and graves during the Romantic period of the 18th and 19th centuries. The historical precedent of how travel (and tourism) provided compelling techniques for imaginatively contacting the dead is well founded (Westover 2012). Thus, despite an increasing academic and media focus on contemporary 'dark tourism' – that is, travel to sites associated with death, disaster or the seemingly macabre – the act of travel to such sites is not a new phenomenon (Stone 2011). Nonetheless, the practice of present-day dark tourism has the capacity to expand boundaries of the imagination and to provide the contemporary visitor with potentially life-changing points of shock. Consequently, sites of dark tourism are vernacular spaces that are continuously negotiated, constructed and reconstructed into meaningful places (Sather-Wagstaff 2011). Furthermore, dark tourism can represent inherent political dichotomies of a 'heritage that hurts' and, in so doing, offer a socially sanctioned, if not contested, environment in which difficult or displaced heritage is consumed. Given its transitional elements and potential to influence the psychology and perception of individuals, dark tourism as a rite of social passage occurs within constructivist realms of meaning and meaning making. Arguably, dark tourism as part of a broader (dark) heritage context provides a contemporary lens through which the commodification of death may be glimpsed, thus revealing relationships and consequences of the processes involved that mediate between individuals and the societal frameworks in which we reside. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to offer an overview of key themes, issues and consequences of how dark tourism can construct and disperse knowledge through touristic consumption of traumascapes that, in turn, can help make contested heritage places salient and meaningful, both individually and collectively. Firstly, however, a review of dark tourism and the tourist experience provides a context for subsequent discussions.

## DARK TOURISM AND THE 'DARK TOURIST' (EXPERIENCE)

Dark tourism as a field of academic scrutiny is where death education and heritage tourism studies collide. Consequently, the scholarly attention on dark tourism and the inherent visitor experience it entails has generated a wealth of typologies, including a surge in descriptive additions to heritage and tourism vocabularies, including thanatourism (Seaton 1996), black spots (Rojek 1993), grief tourism (West 2004) and morbid tourism (Blom 2000). However, despite often-protracted debates over what is and what is not 'dark tourism', the contested term of *dark tourism* has been increasingly applied to a diverse range of global heritage sites, attractions and exhibitions that showcase death. Developing the idea that particular touristic sites of death can either be subjectively lighter or darker (Miles 2002), Stone (2006) offered a dark tourism classification or 'spectrum' that outlined a qualitative set of site-related factors, including political ideologies, educational orientations and interpretation authenticity, that influence 'shades' of touristic experience. Subsequently, there have been concurrent tendencies towards an expansion of the dark tourism typological base, as new locations are brought into the body of research. Correspondingly, there has been a distillation of research within specific subsets of dark tourism, particularly toward the 'darker' poles of positional spectrums: graveyards and cemeteries (Seaton 2002), Holocaust sites (Beech 2009), places of atrocity (Ashworth and Hartmann 2005), prisons and crime sites (Wilson 2008; Dalton 2013) and slavery-heritage attractions (Dann and Seaton 2001; Rice 2009). These subsets of dark tourism are frequently symbolised by iconic landscapes that are often instantly recognisable as well as being recurrent in the academic literature as case studies. For example, Holocaust sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, or Ground Zero in New York – site of the 9/11 attacks – or the Killing Fields in Cambodia where the former Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot committed genocide against his own people, carry extraordinary semiotic weight. Hence, this uncanny significance may influence not only public perception and visitor behaviours, but also research approaches and processes. While discussion of such influences is beyond the scope of this chapter, impacts and consequences of consuming dark tourism may relate to deep-rooted psychosocial concerns about appropriateness, deviance and the taboo (Stone and Sharpley 2013).

The juxtaposition of sites where historic and human significance is of particular magnitude (for example, death camps of the Holocaust) with less socially consequential sites (such as dungeon visitor attractions in the UK and elsewhere) further problematises the dark tourism 'brand', especially within broader heritage terms. Concern about seemingly arbitrary correlation of remarkably different experiences leads some commentators to highlight the risk of dark tourism research findings becoming ambiguous (Stone 2011). Continuing efforts to finesse dark tourism definitions find resonance in Crick's (1989, 313) comment that touristic taxonomies 'separate phenomena that are clearly fuzzy or overlapping'. Meanwhile, Stone's (2006, 146) reservation – 'whether it is actually possible or justifiable to collectively categorise a diverse range of sites, attractions and exhibitions that are associated with death and the macabre as "dark tourism"' – highlights the inherent vulnerability of conceptual frameworks founded on positional spectrums with a limited set of potentially deeply subjective axes – these being, firstly, place/product and, secondly, light/dark qualities. Nevertheless, this vulnerability can be reduced when focus on place attributes is matched by scholarly interrogation of the tourist experience, to inform a more holistic and, crucially, a consequential societal approach, rather than simply a tourist motivation research perspective.

Even so, while tourist motivation has connotations of impetus or attraction that may reinforce a reductive supply/demand paradigm, related research offers useful hypotheses around experiential, contemplative and/or psychological motivations, and corresponding mediating devices. Seaton (1996), for instance, proposes dark tourism as the desire to 'experience' a kind of death as a motivating factor, while later research by Stone (2012a; 2012b) theorises the consequences of visiting some dark tourism sites as a means by which individuals might contemplate their own life and mortality through the tourist gaze on death. Moreover, while Lennon and Foley (2000, 11) suggest dark tourism is an 'intimation of post-modernity', Seaton (2010) traces manifestations of what he terms 'thanatourism' throughout the history of Western civilisation, and its subsequent traditions of thanatopsis – that is, the contemplation of death. Whether seen as a linear consequence to or a distinct postmodern divergence from thanatopic traditions, contemporary dark tourism has some relevance to present-day thanatopic behaviours – especially when located within a thesis of death sequestration and mediating mortality within contemporary society (Stone and Sharpley 2008; Stone 2012a). Dark tourism and the sequestration of death proposition offer a significant context to lines of scholarly enquiry which, subsequently, proposes dark tourism as a contemporary mediating medium by which societies may negotiate notions of mortality. Unsurprisingly, however, given numerous variables and diverse factors influencing the socio-cultural framing of death and dying, the role of dark tourism as a contemporary mediating institution of mortality is not absolute, nor can it ever be. Moreover, while the treatment of death and dying rites and rituals have been used as a means of shielding society from a public consciousness of mortality, such processes have been medicalised and privatised which, in turn, suggests a collective drive to conceal or deny death in the public domain. Yet, robust critiques of the death-denial thesis challenge its discriminative qualities whereby antithetical increases in public (re)presentations of death within societal domains have been proposed (Kellehear 2001). Such arguments problematise research that suggests a supposed sequestration of death and a consequent dichotomy that death is publicly absent but privately present (Giddens 1991; Mellor 1993; Mellor and Shilling 1993). Howarth (2007, 35) goes on to argue that 'it may be that in their quest to uncover hidden death, social theorists have neglected to acknowledge the more public face of death'. Subsequently, dark tourism as a context to scrutinise and acknowledge a more public face of death takes its thanatological research cue.

Less absolute treatments of this absent/present death paradox acknowledge these ambiguities and suggest more nuanced mediations of mortality. Consequently, dark tourism research may be seen as directing traditional thanatopic discourse away from a schismatic argument in which death is *either* concealed *or* revealed, toward different mediations and even metamorphoses of death depending on multifarious societal needs – for example, via different behaviours, institutions and transactions. The proposal by Stone (2012a) that *certain kinds* of death are de-sequestered back into the public domain for contemporary consumption raises complex questions about the public presentation of death, and why and how certain kinds of death may be de-sequestered. Indeed, dark touristic praxis may itself function as a means by which certain kinds of death are de-sequestered and mediated and consumed in specific public domains (Stone 2009a). Moreover, dark tourism can provide transitory moments of mortality in which significant Other death is confronted and where death is rendered into *something else* that is comfortable and safe to deal with and to contemplate (Sharpley and Stone 2009).

Conversely, the motivations of so-called 'dark tourists' may correlate so closely with those of heritage, pilgrimage and special interest tourists (Hyde and Harman 2011) that to infer a

particular interest in death and/or mortality is merely speculative – though post-visit consequences of visiting sites that present the Significant Other Dead may indeed raise broader issues of mortality. Arguably, therefore, closed supply/demand paradigms represent the tourist experience as more culturally reactive to, than directive of, heritage institutions. Yet the designation and emergence of dark tourism locations is often influenced by a combination of public visitation, media scrutiny and political discourse. Indeed, Seaton (1996) privileges touristic demand over its sources and supply, thereby placing dark tourism in the context of behavioural phenomenology. Meanwhile, Sharpley (2009) conceptualises dark tourism as interplay between the characteristics of a site, with all the concomitant variables, and its touristic reception – including consideration of touristic drivers, expectations and perceptions. This invites a nuanced consideration of the tourist and their destination as collaborative agents, engaged in a range of transactional encounters that influence and are influenced by external meanings systems and cultural representations of death and dying.

Despite the diverse range of socio-cultural factors that affect points of access to, engagement with and exit from dark tourism experiences, political, logistical, materialistic and other causal factors help describe and comprehend the fundamental nature of (dark) touristic behaviour. Analysis of the so-called dark tourist experience can be critically validated only when such experiences are understood to exist beyond Seaton's proposed phenomenological 'vacuum', and instead located in a broader context of socio-cultural identities and roles. This is particularly so when researching dark tourism and concomitant visitor experiences and whether it makes sense at all to divide people into different types without taking into account their full life spans. Thus, within current dark tourism scholarship there is an obligation to, and indeed calls for, a more rigorous attention to wider socio-cultural and psychosocial contexts (Biran *et al* 2011; Stone 2013). Moreover, such scholarship might usefully be informed by consideration of broader heritage concepts and it is to these relationships that this chapter now turns.

#### DARK TOURISM AND DARK HERITAGE: TOWARDS A COMMON GROUND

Lennon and Foley (2000) locate the concept of dark tourism within postmodernist contexts, highlighting its key characteristics and mapping them against postmodernist philosophical frameworks. While frequently challenged, this premise represents an openness to, and engagement with, new conceptual dimensions and philosophical underpinnings in tourism studies. These changes include the evolution of cultural tourism, and its associated agendas, into heritage tourism, allowing a theoretical convergence with heritage studies that offers useful perspectives on dark tourism frameworks, experiences and transactions.

Of particular resonance to dark tourism concerns are theories relating to built and/or inhabited environments and the way in which they obtain socio-cultural significance. The typology of place offered by Williams (2009) distinguishes qualified environments, for example *builtscapes*, *workscapes*, *technoscapescapes* and *peoplescapescapes*. More specifically, Jansen-Verbeke and George (2012) observe changing identifications of 'war landscapes' over the past century or so as *memoryscapes*, *heritage landscapes* and *tourism landscapes*. The dark tourism lexicon adds '*deathscapes*' and '*traumascapes*' to this taxonomy and, as such, designation of (death) space according to social use and the making of meaning suggest psychologised processes that inform treatment of communal landmarks and landscapes. Where such landscapes relate to significant conflict, violence or tragedy, intense controversies may arise around their use and development. Such intensity is perhaps

proportionate to the various kinds of investments (socio-cultural, political and emotional) that are perceived to have been made by various stakeholders, both individually and collectively. The examination of the developmental processes – that is, convergences of people, place and time – by which dark tourism sites come into being is, therefore, vital to an enhanced understanding of those sites' functionality and identity within collective heritage contexts.

A useful template by which these developmental processes might be modelled is offered by Foote (1997) in which he examined sites associated with tragic events and, subsequently, suggested a prevailing set of conceptual outcomes. Foote's proposed continuum incorporates stages of *rectification*, *designation* and *sanctification*, through which the historical/cultural identity of sites is created or amended. He also proposes a state of *obliteration*, whereby the locus of violent or tragic events is forgotten in time; obliteration may occur for different reasons (and at various levels of deliberateness and consciousness), but they can all, arguably, be traced to a failure to rectify, sanctify and/or designate the site. Foote (2009, 38–9) maintains that 'no one outcome is ever final. Sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration are not static outcomes, but only steps in a process.' The flexibility of this model reflects the case histories of several iconic sites, such as at particular battlefields, where, for example, designation as a public memorial site may take many years; or redesignation may take place depending on cultural or political shifts (Chronis 2005). It also allows for the rapid creation of temporary memorials (or spontaneous shrines) and their potential, eventual permanence or obliteration. Of course, these processes will be informed and influenced by a diverse set of stakeholders as well as a range of other cultural, historical and ideological factors.

In some cases, authorities may avert spontaneous and non-authorised designation of particular sites through preventative obliteration, especially where the 'attraction of death' for visitors might be met with perceptions of deviance and the taboo (for example, the demolition by authorities of the house inhabited by, and witness to the violent crimes of, Fred and Rosemary West in the UK). Conversely, the Whitehall Cenotaph in London, originally intended by the authorities as a temporary monument (to be *obliterated*), was *designated* a permanent site due to the pressure of public opinion, which *sanctified* the site through mass visitation. This exemplifies, in displaced heritage contexts at least, 'more or less spontaneous gestures of public emotion, as often occurs after wars or public disasters, and the needs they create' (Benton 2010, 1). The question that of course arises is that where such social and emotional needs are met, by and within physical space – the obtaining nexus that may be defined as cultural heritage – might it also, under certain circumstances, be specified as dark tourism?

Arguably, there is no remarkable leap between the impact of prevailing public opinion and a comparable agency within the touristic community. Future research around the lifecycles (and designatory stages) of dark tourism sites may evaluate the impact of the tourist experience on institutional authenticity. Indeed, an examination of the agency of the tourist is of particular value with regard to cross-cultural participation and narrative congruence, and expressions of socio-cultural need. The function of, and challenge to, dark or displaced heritage is 'presenting or constructing monuments and ceremonies that attempt to meet these needs, and to match the inevitable differences in a "collective" memory of the event in question' (Benton 2010, 1). At sites of trauma of international and historic significance, physical and moral spaces may be required to enclose and represent diverse narratives and needs. Here, the iconic tourism site is challenged by what Stone (2009b, 63) describes as 'a post-conventional society' and its need for 'an open identity capable of conversation with people of other perspectives in a relatively egalitarian and

open communicative space'. The issue remains, of course, of how sites located in the often overwhelming and appalling historical contexts of dark tourism can manage such conversation and create such space. Even so, the role of participating communities, including tourist communities, in the development and designation of such sites is critical. Indeed, it may ensure the success of such sites and, thus, prevent obliteration.

Hence, the nature of dark touristic transactions with dark heritage sites invites close study. Of course, while 'dark tourism does not need "dark tourists" – just people who are interested in learning about this life and this world' (Philip Stone quoted in Coldwell 2013, 1) – the tourist experience may have a powerful capacity to direct and influence the landmarks of cultural heritage and its narratives. Interdisciplinary research approaches may include issues of social change, social action and cultural orientation, and the agency of individuals and of groups in influencing significant institutions. Other research avenues for examining the dark tourism/displaced heritage nexus may focus on post-materialist theory and values systems, and on cultural theories of the post-museum and consumer authority in public contexts. In turn, these interdisciplinary discourses may offer germane, complex contexts in which to explore the social significance of dark touristic transactions and, ultimately, their convergence with broader cultural heritage concerns.

#### DARK TOURISM VS DARK HERITAGE: A NARRATIVE DISSONANCE?

In the latter half of the 20th century, heritage studies increasingly privileged the role of memory in identifying what is important in society. In turn, the development of heritage systems were built on and around memory and meaning, rather than, necessarily, on fact and artefact. Benton (2010, 1) reveals a heritage/tourism convergence that emphasised 'the power of collective memory, where large or small groups within society share an idea of what happened in the past and why it was important [which] translates into patterns of tourism'. Clearly, where such groups hold ideas, and perceptions of importance, which are not shared (either with other groups, or with others within a group), their translation is likely to be problematic and even dissonant. Where memories relate to events of trauma, violence and/or conflict, the likelihood of difference in perception of the past is increased. Moreover, where diverse cultures and faith systems are factors, narrative discord may be further exacerbated. For this reason, the memorialisation of extraordinary events and efforts to acknowledge multiple memorial narratives may be fundamentally problematised in modern cultural heritage contexts and, particularly, in contexts in which dark touristic transactions occur. Here, we encounter situations where memory and its translation – or put another way, heritage and tourism – becomes discordant, and we find reflection of those situations in developing conceptual discourse relating to difficult, displaced and/or dissonant heritage.

With regard to touristic concerns, (dark) heritage scholarship allows a focus on the real-world functioning of heritage sites, and specific contemporary dilemmas encountered in their management. Perceptions and interpretations of heritage in modern multicultural societies, and in visitation to Other cultures, are ambiguous; they necessitate consideration of justifiable contestation of heritage and perceived dissonance between 'closed' heritage narratives and 'open' experience and memory. Such considerations are the nucleus of much of the recent literature on heritage messaging and meaning-making systems which may provoke heritage dissonance or even displacement (Ashworth and Hartmann 2005; Poria and Ashworth 2009). Ashworth's (2008)

examination of historic trauma and violence and its implications for heritage tourism resonates with, although its agenda clearly differs from, dark tourism research.

Similarly, the authors in the edited volume by Logan and Reeves (2009) introduce the term 'difficult heritage' in their consideration of sites dealing with genocide, political imprisonment and conflict. However, the term and contextualising case studies used by contributing authors suggest a potential and relevant convergence with dark tourism research; yet only one specific reference is made to dark tourism concepts – that is, the examination of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Young (2009). Arguably, therefore, dark tourism has yet to be fully recognised as a mutually relevant cross-referential field in heritage studies contexts. However, White and Frew (2013), in their examination of sites of dark heritage, suggest an emergent tendency in broader heritage research to evoke dark tourism tropes, where given sites and their associations relate to profound and historic human experience.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to outline key parameters of dark tourism and its fundamental interrelationships with dark heritage. In so doing, the chapter has revealed that dark tourism, while a contested term, is an academic brand that can shine critical light on the touristic consumption of 'heritage that hurts'. Consequently, discourses of both cultural heritage and dark tourism converge and cluster readily when themes of war, disaster, atrocity or social conflict, and memory and identity are in question. However, interpretations of these themes are understandably prone to concerns about dissonance, inclusion, exploitation, sensitivity and appropriateness, and are vulnerable to ideological shifts. There may also be a perceived responsibility, or indeed political direction to support or engage on some level with conflict resolution processes, including rehabilitation and reintegration, especially in pedagogic and interpretation activities. Therefore, developing touristic opportunities at particular dark heritage sites is an increasing, perhaps inevitable, feature of creating contemporary traumascapes in shifting political and socio-cultural contexts. Of course, the practical possibility of travelling to landscapes of conflict and atrocity is one influencing factor in their evolution as tourism destinations, as is their historic and human significance. Therefore, it is likely that dark tourism scholarship will continue to find significant, even growing, mutuality with those of cultural heritage studies and indeed other associated fields. Ultimately, as heritage concerns and systems are further globalised and integrated by political institutions and processes, dark tourism will provide a heritage mechanism in which death is democratised and shared and narrated for the contemporary visitor economy.

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