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Dark Tourism in an Age of 'Spectacular Death'

Philip R. Stone

Introduction

We live in a dominion of the dead. We have always done so. Throughout history the pact between the living and the dead has been one of mutual obligation. We ritualise the dead with a memorialised afterlife, where the deceased depend on the living to maintain their memory. In return, the dead counsel us to know ourselves, provide procedure to our lives, systematise our social relations, and help restrain our ravaging impetuous exploits. In essence, the dead maintain our social and cultural order and, consequently, act as our immortal custodians. We offer the dead a commemorative future so that they may bequeath us an honoured past: we help them live on in memory so that they may help us go forward (Harrison 2003). Yet, while death is universal across time and cultures, dying is not. In other words, death is a finite ending to a biological life while dying embraces varying socio-cultural processes that are inherently influenced by life-worlds.

It is these individual and collective life-worlds that provide us with *deathscapes* (e.g., cemeteries, memorials, exhibitions, former battlefields, shrines,

Death is the problem of the living. Dead people have no problems.
Norbert Elias (2001: 3)

P. R. Stone (✉)
University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK

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etc.) that have changed throughout history and culture (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010). Yet, death—the crux of dark tourism representations—or more specifically the knowledge of mortality is an incessant task for the living as we deal with life. Indeed, society and culture, including religions, are a kind of contrivance to make life with death bearable (Bauman 2006). Death in itself is simply the cessation of life and a natural fact, but the deathscape in which it occurs is fluid and transforms over time. Therefore, death becomes a 'social construct' which continuously changes within a myriad of life conditions (Howarth 2007). Changes in our comprehension and attitudes towards death are brought to bear through transformations in society, culture, politics, religion, and technology, as well as through a sense of historicity (Jacobsen 2017). In other words, we need to comprehend and locate death within broader socio-cultural and historical circumstances in order to better understand contemporary Western (secular) deathscapes (also see Chap. 6). One of these contemporary deathscapes is 'dark tourism', in which significant death of Others is commodified as a spectacle within visitor economies and, subsequently, consumed as tourist experiences. Arguably, therefore, a component of the (post)modern deathscape has become spectacular in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Debord 1977; Connolly 2011; Jacobsen 2016). As part of this spectacularisation of death in contemporary society, dark tourism mediates Other death as a visual signifier of our own mortality. It is here where relationships between death and binary public/private space are becoming increasingly blurred (Young and Light 2016), and where consuming dark tourism deathscapes helps revive, rediscover, recycle, and reinvent the social construction of death.

Thus, drawing upon Michael Jacobsen (2016) and his outstanding review of Philippe Ariès' seminal history of death mentalities (Ariès 1974, 1981, 1985), my chapter suggests rather than asserts that dark tourism offers a display of the dead which can be spectacular. Consequently, dark tourism helps usher in a contemporary mentality of death in secular society where it is now produced as extravagant and consumed as mediated tourist experiences. Moreover, my chapter completes a trilogy of thanatological essays within dark tourism (the first one being Stone and Sharpley 2008; and the second, Stone 2012a). In particular, I extend my earlier conceptual works which located dark tourism within a secular response to mortality mediation and a historical mentality of the 'invisible/forbidden' or sequestered death. Specifically, I contend in this chapter that contemporary dark tourism is now a distinct element of what has been termed the new age of 'spectacular death' (after Jacobsen 2016). Particularly, where death, dying, and mourning have, arguably, become increasing spectacles in Western societies, I suggest dark tourism offers a

potential revival of the so-called forbidden death. Ultimately, I argue that dark tourism as a mediating institution of mortality has the paradoxical tendency of making death linger uneasily between (market) liberation and (heritage) autonomy and control. Therefore, before appraising a new age of spectacular death as a historical extension of death mentalities, and the subsequent role of dark tourism, I first review how dark tourism as a concept can enlighten death in practice within contemporary visitor economies.

Enlightening Dark Tourism

Despite the title of this handbook, there is no such thing as 'dark tourism'—or at least there is no universally accepted definition of what dark tourism actually is or entails (Stone 2016a). Indeed, tourism may be defined simply as the movement of people, while 'dark' has so many subjective and contrasting connotations and linguistic complexities that it is almost futile to define 'darkness' in dark tourism. That said, however, and notwithstanding inherent cultural and semantic intricacies of the terminology, dark tourism is now an international scholarly brand that represents a taxonomy of heritage sites, exhibitions, and visitor attractions that all have commonality—that is, an interpretation of death for the modern visitor economy (Lennon 2017; Baillargeon 2016). Heritage tourism sites that interpret death, whether untimely or in violent or calamitous circumstances, often exist across the world for (secular) pilgrimages, memorialisation, or educative purposes (Lennon and Teare 2017; Oddens 2016; Collins-Kreiner 2015; Roberts and Stone 2014). However, these sites are also part of a broader service sector whereby tourism and the commodification of culture and heritage have been mainstay for many years. Of course, issues and impacts of commodifying cultural heritage are well rehearsed and are not repeated here; yet, the problems of 'packaging up' diverse global *sites of death* or heritage sites *associated with dying* remain (Light 2017; Lennon et al. 2017).

Moreover, whether we can accurately classify 'dark visitor sites' and identify which tourism destinations are indeed 'dark' remains an academic conundrum (Hooper and Lennon 2016). To some extent it matters little if agreement cannot be reached amongst the intelligentsia of what is or what is not 'dark' in dark tourism. Arguably, what matters more is scholarly recognition of heritage sites that seek to interpret death-events which have perturbed the collective consciousness. More importantly, academic interrogation is required to ascertain visitor behavioural reactions to such sites as well as identifying fundamental interrelationships with the cultural condition of society. That

said, however, there has been a concerted academic effort to offer typological frameworks of death-related tourism over the past 20 years or so (Seaton 1996; Dann 1998; Lennon and Foley 2000; Miles 2002; Stone 2006; Dunkley et al. 2007; Jamal and Lelo 2011; Biran and Poria 2012). Much of this effort has focussed on the conceptual shading of dark tourism and whether some sites are 'darker' than others (Strange and Kempa 2003). An obvious point of course is that the notion of a death-event being more despairing and distressing than another is open to a multitude of personal meanings and selective heritage interpretations. What is less obvious is how particular sites can be affixed by various conceptual parameters that can lead to a fluid, if not subjective, continuum of intensity—both for producing such heritage sites and for divergent visitor experiences: for instance, visitor sites with explicit political or commemorative interpretation, sites that are anchored in edification, memorialisation, or *edutainment*, sites that possess locational authenticity or have chronological distance to the actual death-event, as well as the extent of sites adopting neo-liberal business marketing to drive tourist footfall (also see Chap. 26). While this list is not exhaustive and open to evident critique, particularly how to determine such intrinsic features (Seaton 2009a), conceptually positioning visitor sites that portray death-events allow enlightenment of the politics, history, management, and socio-cultural consequences of difficult heritage (Stone 2006).

Dark tourism and its difficult heritage are concerned with encountering spaces of death or calamity that have political or historical significance, and that continues to impact upon the living (Tarlow 2005). Moreover, dark tourism has, to some extent, domesticated death and exposes a cultural institution that mediates between the ordinary Self and the significant Other dead (Stone 2012a). Yet, the production of these deathscapes within the visitor economy and, consequently, the consumption of recent or distant trauma within a collectively endorsed tourism environment raise important questions of the associations between morality, mortality, and contemporary approaches to death and representation of the dead (Stone and Sharpley 2014). As I will discuss later, in a Western secular society where ordinary death is often sequestered behind medical and professional façades, yet extraordinary death is remembered for popular consumption, dark tourism mediates a potential, if not complex, relative social filter between life and death. Furthermore, ethical ambiguities inherent within dark tourism are systematic of broader secular moral dilemmas in conveying narratives of death. Moral boundaries and ethical relativity are often questioned and (re)negotiated in places of dark tourism (Stone 2009a). In turn, the secular institution of dark tourism signifies a communicative channel of morality warning against our excesses, whereby dark

tourism may not only act as a guardian of tragic history, but also plays a moral guardian of a modern society which forever pushes the ethical envelope.

While dark tourism as an academic field of study has brought the interest of visiting deathscapes into the contemporary imagination, numerous conceptual challenges are evident. These multidisciplinary challenges remain outside of the scope of my chapter, yet dark tourism in its broadest sense can be considered dialogic and mediatory. Dark tourism exposes particularities of people, place, and culture, where visiting sites of mortality can reveal ontological anxieties about the past as well as the future. Dark tourism also symbolises sites of dissonant heritage, sites of selective silences, sites rendered political and ideological, sites powerfully intertwined with interpretation and meaning, and sites of the imaginary and the imagined. Therefore, analysing distinctions of dark tourism as a concept and researching its mediating interrelationships with the cultural condition of society is important in contributing to our understanding of the complex associations between (dark) heritages and the tourist experience. It is these associations that provide the rationale to study dark tourism where scholarly investigations can enlighten critical approaches to a contemporary social reality of death.

One of these approaches is locating dark tourism within the milieu of Other death. Arguably, therefore, dark tourism sites are unique auratic spaces whose evolutionary diversity and polysemic nature demand managerial strategies that differ from other visitor sites (Seaton 2009b). This notion of 'aura' from a tourist experience perspective calls for an affective design and interpretation on the part of heritage memory managers. Difficult heritage and its representation should allow visitors to feel alive in their reconnection with the past and to feel empathy with victims. Indeed, within the context of business practice and consumer research, dark tourism experiences will always evoke emotional tensions, albeit to varying degrees, between diverse stakeholders. Even so, dark tourism in practice should extend unbiased, if not balanced, interpretation that offers an opportunity for catharsis and acceptance, as well as grieving for a sense of loss of both people and place (also see Chap. 25). However, while dark tourism as a term may exist within academic imaginations and signifies a broach church of death-related heritage attractions, there are no corresponding 'dark tourists'. Dark tourists by implication of so-called dark tourism do not exist—only people interested in the social reality of their own life-worlds. Nonetheless, dark tourism in practice is identifiable where social scientists may scrutinise multidisciplinary quandaries that impact on death and the dead as contemporary commodities (Stone 2011a; Ashworth and Isaac 2015; Grebenar 2017). As a result, dark tourism exposes a cultural practice that blurs the line between commemoration of the dead and

commodification of death. Therefore, it is how death has become 'packaged up and touristified' in contemporary Western society that my chapter now turns. In particular, I outline successive death mentalities as conceptual underpinning and as an established historic frame of reference. Thereafter, I argue for the emergence of a new pluralistic death mentality in a cosmopolitan age, whereby the re-ritualisation of death through dark tourism is becoming increasingly mediated, commodified, and, thus, spectacular.

Death Mentalities: A Historical Overview

French historian Philippe Ariès in his three major works on the social history of death (Ariès 1974, 1981, 1985) describes how the mentality of death has transformed over the last millennium in Western Europe (and to some extent North America). Despite the many years since publication, the works of Ariès (who passed away in 1984) remain seminal points of reference in the social scientific study of death. Indeed, his much-cited and often criticised work (see, e.g., Bauman 1992; Walter 1994; Elias 2001) offers a rather simplified, if not detailed, linear approach to the history of death. As such, Ariès proposed four key developmental stages of death from the Middle Ages to the late twentieth century. Arguably, Ariès' division of the past millennium into four distinct death phases—'tamed death [up until the 15th century]; one's own death/death of the Self [17th century]; thy death/death of the Other [18th/19th century]; and forbidden/invisible death [20th century]'—offers an almost unavoidable determinist and reductionist approach in their sequential ordering. Yet, by the same token, the amount of connected and partially connected social history into a decipherable and analytical schema makes the framework germane. Ariès (1981) goes on to add a fifth stage—the sixteenth century *remote and imminent death*—which appeared between death of the Self and death of the Other. Notwithstanding this addition, I will concentrate on the original four-stage version in this chapter as a conceptual foundation to contemporary deathscapes. Of course, transformations in the collective cultural psychology of any historic epoch mean that a history of death cannot have a starting point or, for that matter, an end point. Instead, I take the work of Ariès to suggest an interpretive framework to access contemporary social practices and attitudes of death, rather than testing it for historical accuracy. In turn, I offer an indicative discussion rather than conclusive discourse, which is much more polemical than historically precise. Ultimately, by outlining the work of Ariès and even going beyond Ariès (Jacobsen 2016), our cultural organisation of deathscapes such as dark tourism can be scrutinised.

The Tamed Death

Despite the social history of dying having a much longer chronicle (Davies 2005; Kellehear 2007; Kerrigan 2007), the analytical commencement point for Ariès was the *tamed death* of the medieval period. It is here that for Ariès the tame[d] death was so different from contemporary death in almost every respect. In an age where most people led a relatively short and often unpleasant existence, death became a relief from the vagrancies of feudal life. As the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes once remarked of pre-modern society—it was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes cited in Warbuton 2012)—thus, arguably, the medieval death tamed life. Indeed, during this period, Ariès argues that there was a societal fluency with death where the living and the dead co-existed in a physical and spiritual proximity. For instance, evident in the *Danse Macabre* (Dance of Death)—an artistic genre of late-medieval allegory on the universality of death—medieval populaces 'were as familiar with the dead as they were familiar with the idea of their own death' (Ariès 1974: 25). The shadow of the Grim Reaper—and remains of the decomposing deceased—was never far away as medieval inhabitants lived and died in propinquity. The final farewell at the medieval deathbed, in the presence of angels and demons in religious imagery and iconography, would witness communities gathering to communicate with dying. This communitas death collided with religious sentiments and proscribed (mainly Catholic) rituals that, in turn, ensured death was pacified in public. As Jacobsen (2016: 4) notes, 'death was a prepared, accepted and solemn event without theatrics in which the dying presided'. In short, without any genuine medicinal aid, death may have been ghastly and dying intrinsic with pain, yet the tamed deathbed was a fundamental feature of medieval society in which death was seen as a seemingly welcome end to a short hard-lived lifespan and the beginning of a long afterlife.

Death of the Self

As the tamed death gave way to a period of *one's own death/death of the Self,* the emphasis morphed from the communitas of death to a more individualised encounter. Indeed, death of the Self 'marked a shift in death mentality that instead of focusing on death as such was more concerned with the individual and the time of death as a moment of *maximum awareness*' (Jacobsen 2016: 4, original emphasis). As a result, the deathbed became 'reserved for the dying man alone and one which he contemplates with a bit of anxiety and a great

deal of indifference' (Ariès 1974: 34). The beginning of this individualised deathbed meant that death became more personal, and matters conducted in life would influence any quest for celestial perpetuity. Thus, death of the Self was concerned with how the individual, within religiosity and its control, could prepare for, confront, and reconcile with the mortal coil.

Death of the Other

The increased alienation and distance of death of the Self, where attention was on the dying making amends before meeting his or her maker, was supplanted by a death mentality that witnessed a collision with the Romantic period in European art and literature. In the subsequent period of *thy death/death of the Other*, the emphasis shifted away from the dying to the bereaved, and to what has sometimes been referred to as the *beautiful*, *Romantic*, or *good death* (Walter 2003). Indeed, mortality was a major subject of Romantic art, literature, and travel which 'turned death into sensibility – not so much a religious and moral mediation in the medieval, *memento mori* tradition, [but] as an imaginative dwelling on fatality for aesthetic gratification' (Seaton 2009a: 531).

As a mourning culture took hold and 'a new intolerance of separation' (Ariès 1974: 59) of losing a loved one became the norm, funerary rituals became more melancholic and ostentatious, and the discernible despair of grieving and loss were hallmarks of death of the Other. Jacobsen (2016: 5) goes on to note, 'pietistic and spiritualistic *cults of the dead* testified to just how much death was now seen as a rupture… therefore making mourners desperately seeking contact with the deceased' [original emphasis]. Gothic style theatrics and familial bonds saw the Victorian death of the Other evolve through a waning of eternal damnation messages prescribed by ecclesiastics, with advancements in medicines prescribed by doctors. Moreover, with the emergence of the urbanised family with its new structures of feeling (Porter 1999a), attention became fixed not on the decedent but on those who continued to live. Influenced through Romanticism, including the quixotic depiction of death in art, literature, and poetry, the rituals of death became much more sentimental, if not morbid, and mourning became a family concern that perpetuated the memory of the deceased (Westover 2012). Indeed, the death of the Other became a death-with-dignity, a kind of good death where calmness prevailed in readiness for a dignified departure from the mortal world. The death of the Other was an illustration of how we paid respectful deference to the laws of nature, and how the time of passing became an opportunity to put

'things in order'. Moreover, the death of the Other was signified by the writing of wills with final bequests bestowed, sanctimonious instructions given to survivors, forgiveness sought both from companions and from God, promises of reunions made, and final words spoken. As Tercier (2005: 12) suggests, 'the business of the [Romantic] deathbed became just that: the tidying and tying up of unfinished business'. Thus, the Romantic reconstruction of thy death was nothing more distressing than a final peaceful sleep. With a darkened room, family and loved ones at the bedside, affairs in order, peace made with both survivors and God, and with a few gentle and quiet farewells, the decedent would dignifiedly drift off into an eternal slumber. Of course, this romanticised death of the Other was an ideal in the mindscape of a Victorian society who came to think of death as simply way of 'expiring consumption' (Jalland 1996). In its ultimate form, the death of the Other appeared to be a perfect coincidence of both social dying and biological death, which did not rely (solely) upon ontological continuity. However, while spiritual aspects were still important to thy death and religious forms still embraced the hope of an eternal existence, deathbeds that were increasingly secular found solace in medicinal relief from pain and discomfort. In short, the romantic Other death (re)created death and the dead for (re)evaluation and contemplation for the living (Stone 2014). Importantly, however, throughout the protracted history of the three aforementioned discrete death mentalities within Western culture, a number of dynamisms are evident:

> [processes of] individualisation, secularisation, urbanisation, the rise of humanism and the advancement of natural science were some of the main driving forces behind the gradual shift from one phase to the other and in many of the changes taking place in the planning, use and appearance of cemeteries, burial and disposal practices, relations between the living and the dead, eschatological beliefs, the time and place of dying and everything else associated with what is referred to as the *domain of the dead*. [Ariès 1981: 595] Jacobsen 2016: 5)

The Invisible/Forbidden Death

Following the death of the Other, the domain of the dead underwent a metamorphosis during the twentieth century, which according to Ariès saw the emergence of the *invisible* or *forbidden death*. It is within this phase that Ariès reveals his revulsion for modern developments and suggests modernity is marked by a waning of faith, especially for an (eternal) afterlife. Kellehear (2007) later characterised the invisible death as the *shameful death* for the lack of overt social exchanges between dying individuals and those who institutionally

care for them. Hence, with the full onset of secularisation, the invisible death was signified by sequestration (Mellor and Shilling 1993) and the role of institutions, especially the medical establishment where increasing bureaucratisation and hospitalisation, as Ariès (1981: 559) alleges, 'robbed the dead and dying of all dignity'. Therefore, the invisible or forbidden death, where deaths were sequestered and 'disappeared' from the community gaze, is largely due to the process of medicalisation and professionalisation of the modern deathbed. Certainly, the position of the physician at the nineteenth century (Romantic) deathbed became entrenched and consolidated through advancements in therapeutic techniques and pathophysiology, as well as an expanding pharmacopoeia (Porter 1999b). Augmenting the position of the physician as an authority over death were technical advances and acceleration of the bureaucratic super-structure that became the foundation of the modern State. With increasing hospitals (and later hospices) and dispensaries, combined with professionalisation of disposal through regularisation of death certificates, post-mortems, advances in funerary technology, and the storage of cadavers, the invisible death became almost just that: concealed and obscured behind the façade and machinery of a (new) death, dying, and disposal industry.

Consequently, with increasingly industrialisation being applied to the deathbed, in terms of both processes and procedures, Porter (1999a: 84) notes, 'rather as the philosophes rationalised death, modern man has in effect denied his own mortality, and death has become taboo'. As the twentieth century progressed, the physicians' control over the process of dying increased, and death moved out of the familiar environs of the family and community to become institutionalised under a medical gaze. Thus, the transfer of power and emphasis from priest to doctor is now almost complete, and the care of the soul and body has shifted realms from post-mortem religious ritual to ante-mortem medical protocol. Finally, deritualisation and the lack of communal mourning of the invisible death meant that time-saving and minimalistic practices became associated with death and dying. Consequently, the individual, when confronted with mortality, is left to find his or her own peace and purpose. The gradual demise of collective meaning-making and communal support meant, according to Ariès at least, that death rituals in the past had provided people with a good death. In its place was a medicalised, institutionalised, and professionalised deathbed that offered some relief from the pain of dying yet, paradoxically, provided for a bad death. As Tercier (2005: 13) states:

> In the ideal modern death, biological, social and ontological death not only coincide but are meant to occur in such an instant that, perhaps, the whole business [of mortality] can be ignored, allowed to slip past unnoticed. Hence the invisibility of death.

The De-sequestration of Death: Towards the Spectacular Death

Undoubtedly, Phillippe Ariès left a legacy of stimulating if not contentious accounts of the social history of Western deathbeds. Yet, since his passing in 1984, society has changed remarkably and the death mentality and private/public deathscape bonding has also changed (Jacobsen 2016; Jonsson and Walter 2017). Moreover, sociologists have attempted to capture epochal transformations and the new collective conscience during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with a plethora of polemic labels. These include terms, including but not limited to, postmodernity, reflexive modernity, late modernity, radicalised modernity, supermodernity, second modernity, or liquid modernity (see, for instance, Giddens 1990, 1991; Fornäs 1995; Ray 1999; Bauman 2000; González-Ruibal 2008; Beck and Grande 2010). While a discussion of the main processes embodying and driving these societal and cultural developments is beyond the scope of my chapter, they do point to how our contemporary world differs in many respects from that of the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. This includes death and how 'death in advanced modernity is qualitatively different from modern death' (McManus 2013). Therefore, Jacobsen (2016) argues that Ariès' final appellation of the 'invisible/forbidden' death is too parochial to properly designate contemporary death today. That said, Jacobsen acknowledges certain insights from Ariès' social history of death still persist, such as death remaining an integral element of a controlling, medicalising, and sequestering mentality. However, the invisible/forbidden death as a historical classification is now too limited to wholly describe contemporary death, because 'it is challenged by a death that is gradually coming out of the closet, as it were, and now confronts us in ways unimaginable to our grandparents' generation' (Jacobsen 2016: 10).

A key feature of Ariès' invisible/forbidden death thesis advocated it was concealed, denied, and tabooed. Yet, as Walter (1991) notes over a quarter a century ago, death is hidden rather than forbidden and it is the modern individual, not modern society, that denies death. Similarly, Mellor (1992) argued that while death remains hidden in the sense that it is generally sequestered from public space, as noted earlier, there is a contemporary presence of death, not least in popular culture, cyberspace, cultural heritage exhibitions, and the mass media (Walter et al. 1995; Sion 2014; Sayer and Walter 2016). Consequently, 'a sociological consideration of death must reflect upon, and attempt to explain, the apparent contradiction between the absence and presence of death in contemporary society' (Mellor 1992: 11; also see Stone and Sharpley 2008; Stone 2012a). By the same token, Walter (1994) argued that dying and mourning

beliefs and customs are continually evolving and, as a result, death was being revived from its repression. In an update to his 'revival of death' proposition, Walter (1994, 2014) suggested that while conversational norms still govern public discourse on death, death is in fact no longer taboo. To illustrate further colloquial death conversations with another analogous societal taboo—that is, sex—Walter (2014: online) playfully notes that 'I don't talk to my students about what I did in bed last night, but that doesn't mean sex is a taboo topic in our society'. Moreover, Geoffrey Gorer's (1955) prophetic claim of a 'pornography of death' in society meant that the prudency of sequestered natural death re-emerges as reprehensibly graphic representations of violent death within the public media realm (also Tercier 2013). Importantly, therefore, Jacobsen (2016: 10) captures the rupture of the absent/present death paradox and suggests a new death mentality has now emerged and that 'death shall have a new dominion'. As a result, Jacobsen applies the epithet of *spectacular death* to denote present-day death as it is experienced, constructed, and performed in what Kellehear (2007) called our 'cosmopolitan age'. In other words, spectacular death exists where many of our traditions, practices, and beliefs are reinterpreted to fit new socio-cultural circumstances.

While not the first to use the term 'spectacular death' (Connolly 2011; Pavićević 2015), Jacobsen (2016) draws his main inspiration of his new mentality of death from the French situationist theorist Guy Debord (1977; also see Chap. 10). Debord proposed the idea of 'a society of the spectacle' in which the semiotics of contemporary society are consumed in a kind of hyperrealism. To that end, Jacobsen (2016: 10, original emphasis) argues that '*spectacular death* is a death that has for all practical intents and purposes been transformed into a *spectacle*'. Indeed, as Debord first envisaged, our contemporary society is saturated with signs and symbols whereby primary direct experiences are replaced by mere representations. Therefore, for Jacobsen, the spectacular death in our cosmopolitan age is an extension of the death mentalities proposed by Ariès, whereby contemporary death is now de-sequestered and returned to the public domain through display and symbolic representations. As Jacobsen (2016: 10) notes:

> Spectacular death thus inaugurates an obsessive interest in appearance that simultaneously draws death near and keeps it at arm's length – it is something that we witness at a safe distance with equal amounts of fascination and abhorrence, we wallow in it and want to know more about it without getting too close to it.

While I have examined elsewhere the symbolic display and de-sequestration of death within a dark tourism framework, particularly within a structural

analysis of death and a Western secular response to mortality mediation (Stone and Sharpley 2008; Stone 2009b, 2012a), the notion of how such de-sequestration occurs has been overlooked until now. If Jacobsen's idea of a new death mentality in the form of 'spectacular death' is to have traction, then some of the dimensions of the spectacular death mentality require elucidation. Of course, as Jacobsen points out, there are many thanatological dimensions of and socio-cultural facets to spectacular death—too many and irrelevant to discuss here. Therefore, for the remainder of my chapter, I will concentrate on three key aspects of how the spectacle of dark tourism cements a new era of the de-sequestered and spectacular death and, thus, helps revive death in the public domain. These key aspects, as denoted by Jacobsen (2016), are, firstly, *the new mediated/mediatised visibility of death*; secondly, *the commercialisation of death*; and, finally, *the re-ritualisation of death*.

Dark Tourism as Spectacular Death

If death was hidden or forbidden as claimed by Ariès, then we would neither see it nor encounter it. Indeed, as suggested earlier, the taboo of death in a death-denying Western secularised society has lost its grip and, consequently, death is becoming increasingly anchored in new structures that expose us to mortality. One of those new structures is a *new mediated/mediatised visibility of death* in which extraordinary death of often ordinary people is presented to us in visual and mediated forms (Jacobsen 2016). Of course, this is nothing like the tamed death of the medieval period where 'real-life death' surrounded the masses. Instead, the new mediated forms of significant Other deaths, either as a result of recent or historic trauma, are safely displayed to us as spectacle for contemporary consumption—firstly in the mass media, then later within the realms of dark tourism (also see Chap. 14). Thus, dark tourism, like the media, is one of numerous institutions of mortality in contemporary society that mediates and visualises a particular kind of death for some people for some of the time (Walter 2009; Stone 2011b). However, despite being exposed to an incongruent assortment of 'mortality moments' within dark tourism (Stone 2009b), we remain divorced from the social reality of death and, in comparison to bygone death mentalities, we rarely experience directly real-death events. Instead, we 'encounter corpses' in dark tourism that have been selected, politicised, commemorated, or celebrated through the heritage touristification process (Convery et al. 2014). That said, however, we do not encounter the actual corpse but a visualised chronicle of the often tragic or horrid circumstances in which the death occurred (Stone 2016b). As a result,

the contemporary memento mori that dark touristic deaths mediate can seem empty without accompanying meaningful narratives which, consequently, can make death more of a spectacle than an existential topic.

The new visibility of mediatised death within dark tourism is there is to provoke, impact, educate, or to entertain. Notwithstanding inherent and well-rehearsed complexities in difficult heritage processes or memorialisation practices, dark tourism as spectacular death brings back the forbidden or invisible dead. Ghosts are returning to the feast and are resurfacing and multiplying in a multitude of dark tourism sites across the world. In this way, death—or at least as a mediated and mediatised phenomenon—is much more pervasive in touristic landscapes than even a few decades ago. Therefore, 'death is very much present whilst being bizarrely absent' (Jacobsen 2016: 11) and, thus, 'death is everywhere yet nowhere in Western culture' (Horne 2013: 231). Death in contemporary society is spectacularly present through dark tourism despite its apparent absence. As Bauman (1992: 7, original emphasis) contends, 'the impact of death is at its most powerful and creative when death *does not appear under its own name*; [and] in areas and times which are not explicitly dedicated to it'. Moreover, if Geoffrey Gorer's aforementioned 'pornography of death' acted as a kind of transferral for the repression of Ariès' forbidden death, and as an outlet for such cultural fears, then the visibility of mediatised death through dark tourism helps fuel a new cultural fascination with death.

A second and closely related dimension of 'spectacular death', according to Jacobsen (2016), is the *commercialisation of death* (also see Chap. 27). Death sells and probably always will either through macabre intrigue, genuine interest, or puerile titillation. While Jacobsen focussed his commercialisation of death dialogue on the increasingly mercantile nature of funerary practice, as well as the use of death as entertainment in popular culture, I suggest a euphoric consumerism of death exists in dark tourism. Therefore, death is not only turned into a spectacle through mediated visual representations in dark tourism but is also part of a broader entrepreneurial exercise. Indeed, the business of death within dark tourism has evolved from Gothic aesthetic interests, including Romantic-era death-related tourism where travel to meet dead authors' homes or deceased artists' final resting places became journeys of 'necromanticism' (Westover 2012). Tourism as the movement of people, of course, is dictated to by supply-and-demand vagaries of market forces as well as complex push-and-pull factors inherent within commerce and industry; and dark tourism and its difficult heritage are no different. Neo-liberal market processes and practices are bought to bear on packaging up, marketing, and retailing the dead for contemporary

consumption. Whether under the guise of public memorialisation or private money-making, the significant Other dead in dark tourism are kept alive and promoted as spectacles for the living. Memory managers of difficult heritage are striving to commemorate and document tragedy and death, yet also strive to shape the sacred design and choreography of visitor experiences in dark tourism places. In (re)framing acts of atrocity and disaster, dark tourism often commercialises sites of secular pilgrimage, which in turn can lead to rites of political and socio-cultural passage (Hansen-Glucklich 2014). Therefore, the commercialisation of death inherent in dark tourism, and as a dimension of the new spectacular death mentality, means our concern and exposure to death has not decreased. Conversely, we are witnessing an increase in supply of and demand for 'death-related visitor attractions' (Lennon and Foley 2000), which in many respects is fuelled by commercialised and consumerised dark tourism.

Equally as an expression and consequence of this contemporary exposure to death and its commercialisation through dark tourism is a third dimensioning of spectacular death—that is, *the re-ritualisation of death* (Jacobsen 2016). The invisible/forbidden death mentality of Ariès' modern society suggested death was being reversed through its minimalistic and less elaborate rituals. At the same time, the meaning-making importance—both personal and religious—of such death rituals diminished and, consequently, individuals were left increasingly isolated in the face of mortality. However, as Jacobsen (2016: 12) argues, 'as a new counterculture to this disappearance or denigration of many death rituals so characteristic just a century and a half ago, we [are] now gradually see[ing] the rise of new rituals and the reappearance and reinvention of old ones'. The complexities of these new rituals have been explored in dark tourism and the collective heritage of remembrance and forgetting (Benton 2010), including in places of pain and shame and how difficult heritage re-enacts them (Logan and Reeves 2008). Moreover, as they have been an apparent 'global rush to commemorate atrocities', memorial museums and accompanying dark tourism have witnessed 'an extraordinary boom in a new kind of cultural complex' (Williams 2007). Consequently, this 'memorial mania' according to Doss (2010) invokes the re-ritualisation of death as a spectacle in public spaces, akin to the Victorian 'death of the Other' where there was also a desire to publicly mark and celebrate the remembrance of the deceased. Notwithstanding other obvious contemporary re-rituals of death, including in funerary and burial practice or digital legacies, dark tourism offers a re-ritualising of death through its evanescent visitor experience and ephemeral consumption. As such, dark tourism can offer a potential 'mortality capital' to some individuals whereby absent death is made present

within the public domain, and ritually revived through a substitute of recreated tragic situations and commemoration (Stone 2012b).

The spectacular death, and dark tourism being just one element of its defining features, is of course a challenge to and an extension of Ariès' forbidden, hidden, denied, silenced, repressed, and tabooed death thesis. As Jacobsen (2016: 14) rhetorically suggests, 'it seems that while we successfully kicked death out of the front door of modernity, it appears to have sneaked its way in through the back door or has squeezed through the cat flap in contemporary society'. In many ways, therefore, the spectacular death thesis as proposed by Jacobsen and augmented in my chapter is testament to the aforementioned revival of death thesis by Walter (1994, 2014). Indeed, I have argued elsewhere (Stone 2012a) that dark tourism joins the family of mediating institutions in which a neo-modern death mentality ushers in open-mindedness and individualistic encounters with mortality. As such, Jacobsen (2016: 15) suggests:

> [that] we are reviving, retrieving, rediscovering and reinventing death in a process in which the old and almost forgotten practices and ideals are mixed with the new social conditions characteristic of contemporary equally individualised, globalized, mediate/mediatised and technologically advanced late-modern, post-modern or liquid-modern society.

To that end, dark tourism may indeed be 'an imitation of post-modernity' as first claimed by Lennon and Foley (2000); yet, when examined under a structural analysis of historic death mentalities, dark tourism represents a spectacular 'new (old) death' (Schillace 2015).

Importantly, however, while the de-sequestration of death and a subsequent revival of death thesis may have valuable conceptual clout, Jacobsen reminds us that the seemingly liberation and revival of death in the public domain involves new forms of administration, limitations, and subjectification in the way we comprehend and construct spectacular death. In what Jacobsen (2016: 15) terms a 'partial re-reversal' of death—in recognition of the remaining attributes of Ariès' invisible/forbidden modern deathbed—he goes on to suggest that we are witnessing something new and heretofore unseen in death landscapes. I contend here that dark tourism is part of this new spectacular death landscape. In turn, dark tourism means that we do not face the Grim Reaper directly but, instead, consume the mortality spectacle of significant Others. Dark tourism in an age of the spectacular death ensures that mediatised/mediated death lingers uneasily between the liberation of market and commercial forces, yet is subject to cultural heritage selection and control. Dark tourism presents, in many respects, paradoxical deaths

in that we collectively remember (or forget) tragic death in the hope that we have an authentic and autonomous death after a long and fulfilled life. Consequently, heritage processes selectively seek to manage, contain, control, dilute, or politicise dark tourism deaths; yet, the spectacular death mentality of dark tourism brings us into a new dominion of the dead. As such, dark tourism in a new age of spectacular death means that death of the Other is served to us as a contemporary spectacle, yet death of the Self continues to haunt the consciousness of the living and is hitherto to be tamed.

Conclusion

Death is universal to all societies which must simultaneously deny its existence yet accept its inevitability. The age of any spectacular death will have to conform to that eternal rule. Through an analysis of seminal historic mentalities of death as proposed by Philippe Ariès, and augmenting the 'revival of death' and 'spectacular death' theses suggested by Tony Walter and Michael Jacobsen respectfully, my chapter has outlined how successive deathbed histories reveal a contemporary age of the spectacular death. Moreover, I have argued how dark tourism is manifested as a defining institution of spectacular death through its key features of mediated/mediatised visibility of death, commercialisation of death, and the re-ritualisation of death. Spectacular death in dark tourism exposes mortality that is regulated and structured by heritage production, yet at the same time commodifies death as a form of visitor economy consumption. Thus, consuming the spectacle of death in dark tourism might mean a de-sequestration and de-taboo of death in public, but it may also perhaps reinforce the sting of death in private. Whether the age of the spectacular death and concomitant dark tourism experiences usher in a new death mentality, or intensify certain characteristics of the forbidden death, death is undoubtedly being revived, rediscovered, recycled, and reinvented. Of course, it remains to be seen what role dark tourism as a contemporary behavioural phenomenon plays in the (re)construction of death, and future research will enlighten this new dominion of the dead. Ultimately, however, despite everything, death remains a problem for the living because dead people do not care.

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