

Through Lenses of Remembrance:  
Ethical Photography at Dark Tourism Sites

How can photography ethically and effectively memorialize sites of tragedy and atrocity, shifting the focus from dark tourism to a respectful act of remembrance?



Figure 1: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glane, France.

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## Declaration

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Date: **05/11/2024**

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## Introduction

Over the recent years the term ‘Dark Tourism’ has been used to associate the travel of an individual to a historical location that have had tragic events occur. These can include locations such as battlefields, concentration camps, war memorials, prisons and even sites of natural disaster. While the concept of ‘Dark Tourism’ has faced many critiques, this is due to the fine line between commercializing a site and the memorialization of the location (Lennon 2017).

Redefining the term ‘Dark Tourism’ will also contribute to the educational implications of the historical locations. Places such as war memorials and monuments can serve as a reminder of what the outcomes of war can become and how it can impact the communities around the tragedy. The educational purpose of ‘Dark Tourism’ is very important but as there is such a fine line, it needs to be taught respectfully (Lennon 2017).

Bridging the gap between past events and the present-day audiences, photography can capture the emotional and historical intrinsic nature of these sites of memory. Anton Kusters (Kusters 2018), Chloe Dewe Mathews (Mathews 2015), and Simon Norfolk (Norfolk 2002) are among the photographers that encapsulate the profound harm and damage caused by conflict, as well as the depths of suffering and calamity ingrained in these locations. Their photographs and work can provoke and invite viewers to empathize with the victims.

By encouraging spectators to stop, pause, consider, and reflect on the importance of these historical sites as remembrance, photography can serve as a tool for introspection as well as education. Photographs preserve and help to shape collective memory, by apparent details but also the conveying mood of seriousness of those events. Capturing scenes that involve individuals who are suffering grief and pain, must strike a balance between ethical sensitivity and artistic expression. As society continues to face the past, the accountability of those individuals who chronicle these moments of history are paramount to how societies learn and memorialize the past.

The primary focus of this dissertation is to explore the alternative perspective and the altering connection between ‘Dark Tourism’ and memorialization, emphasizing on the significant impact around sites of tragedy and the impact on an audience’s engagement. This study also seeks to demonstrate the value of evolving sites of tragedy from mere attractions to places of reflection and contemplation through multiple case study’s, including the location within the figures throughout the dissertation, Oradour – Sur – Glane, France. Visual representation can foster an increased awareness and understanding of historical trauma. Additionally, analysing how photographers such as Anton Kusters, Chloe Dewe Mathews, and Simon Norfolk represent their work and how it can influence on memory.

## Chapter 1: Redefining Dark Tourism

### 1.1: The Origins of Dark Tourism

The 'Dark Tourism' label has been associated with travelling to historical sites and landmarks that have been involved in and are connected to misery, suffering, natural disaster and death. First introduced in the 1990's, over the past three decades the concept has grown in appeal within the tourism industry. The label has drawn criticism for demeaning these Important and sentimental historical sites and transforming them into destinations for tourists to come and go as they please. In accordance with some researchers the commercialisation value of these historical locations may jeopardize their educational importance. 'Dark Tourism' is frequently viewed through the frame of spectacle rather than reflection, as Duncan Light (2017) emphasises from Foley & Lennon (1996).

*"Foley and Lennon (1996) focused on the 'supply' dimension of dark tourism and the ways in which places of death or suffering are presented to and interpreted for visitors (with particular emphasis on issues of ethics, commodification and appropriateness). Their arguments were underpinned by the assumption that any site that is associated with death is essentially dark"* – Duncan Light (2017)

To suggest and encouraging and effective engaging historical location, we have to analyse the commemorative, emotional, and cultural significance of these sites rather than 'tourism', this is to connect with the location and the events that occurred in a more respectful manner.

Instead of capitalizing on these historical locations as a destination for tourism, memorialisation of these spaces can create an environment that is respectful, a space for contemplation, shared learning, and sorrow (Fonseca et al. 2015).

### 1.2: Academic Perspectives on Dark Tourism

To contextualize disaster and raise knowledge, 'Dark Tourism' destinations should include educational resources. This can have a dramatic impact on how the visitors experience goes from mindless sightseeing to a reflective learning journey. 'Dark Tourism' is influenced by the psychological triggers that encourage tourists to face the morality and recognise past pain. Historical empathy can be encouraged by educational frameworks that can help tourist acquire a profound and cognitive awareness of past suffering.

Researchers and academics highlight and emphasise the significance of responsible tourism, requesting and advising that without adequate education of responsible tourism, they could get involved in voyeurism rather than reflection. It can be achievable to make sure that visits to such historical sites are handled and conducted with care, dignity and awareness of how serious the history is involving the locations. By putting polices into place as well as educational activities and initiatives, 'Dark Tourism' can become a place of Remembrance.

Testimonies from survivors or stories that have been passed down in the family through letters or journals can give a better understanding of what happened at the historical location and how it impacted them as a person and family. It's important to share these stories as they can tell the visitors of these site how awful the events were, enhancing empathy and comprehension. A good example of this is from a village out in France, Oradour-Sur-Glane. There is a book published by Andre Desourteaux and Robert Hebras called *The Slaughter of Our Village* (Desourteaux and Hebras 2001). To give some historical narrative, June 10, 1944, the village had been massacred during World War II, by German Warffen-SS troops. The massacre resulted in 644 deaths, including men, women and children, with only a few survivors (Gentry 2018). Since the village had been set alight after the massacre, nothing had been left, Oradour-Sur-Glane now stands as a reminder and remembrance site of all victims who lost their lives that day. An exhibition had been created called *Oradour Faces* (Atelier 144, 2014). This gives visitors the chance to see the people, their names and ages. Walking through the exhibition, which is currently at Oradour-Sur-Glane, gives visitors a sombre and self-analysing view of the event that occurred. (More information on Oradour-Sur-Glane will be explained in detail in 'Chapter 2, 2.2 The Symbolism of Oradour-Sur-Glane as a memorial site').

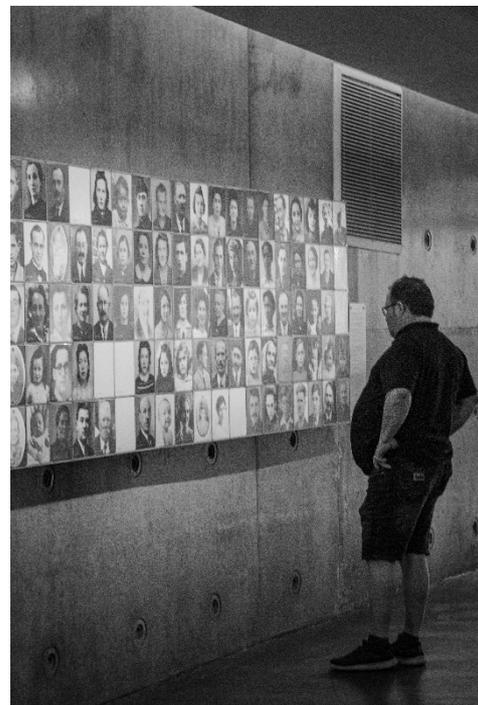


Figure 2: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glane, France, *Oradour Faces Exhibition*.

### 1.3: Memorialisation and its Ethical Implications

The ethical debate between memorialization and ‘Dark Tourism’ circulates around the morality of how we commemorate and portray tragic events. Their primary distinction is how the perspective can affect the visitor’s experience.

Memorialisation implies that individuals actively engage with the history by urging them to connect with the stories in an emotional/ personal level and intellectually (Lennon 2017). The recognition of the pain that the victims of these tragic locations and/or those who have witnessed events are in this process of healing, the acceptance of the difficult realities.

However, as Duncan Light (2017) points out, dark tourism frequently runs the risk of commodifying tragedy by providing a sensationalised or simplified account of what happened. Memorialisation also brings up moral dilemmas, such as how much should be depicted and how to strike a balance between historical accuracy and consideration for the families of survivors and victims.

With regards to how sensitive this particular topic is and how fine the line is between ‘Dark Tourism’ and Memorialization many photographers have taken on the challenge of this sensitive subject. For example, photographer Chole Dewe Mathew’s *Shot at Dawn* series records the environment where men were executed at dawn in World War I, her aim with the project is to honour those victims.

By doing this, she raises the site above the level of a historical anecdote and promotes contemplation of the larger ramifications of sacrifice, memory, and war. Her work serves as an example of how memorialisation in photography can produce a story that is more contemplative and captivating without resorting to the macabre or scary (Mathews 2015).



Figure 3: Chloe Dewe Mathews 2015, *Shot at Dawn*, “*Soldat Joseph Pascal, Soldat Lucien Joseph Royer, Soldat Édouard Jules Sayer, Soldat Jean Pierre Soulier, 08:00 / 5.9.1914 Les Rouges-Eaux, Vosges, Lorraine*”

## Chapter 2: Case studies of Memorialisation.

### 2.1: Remembering Genocide and Loss

In this section, it will be examining and delving into *Remembering Genocide and Loss* by investigating into how these sites are powerful locations of recollection, where photography and the gathering of space can greatly influence the public's consciousness and collective memory. Auschwitz, which is a historical location that encapsulates the atrocity that occurred of the Holocaust, have matured and transformed over time into a real physical and metaphorical location of mourning, sorrow, and educational purpose. These historical locations indicate and demonstrate how 'Dark Tourism' facilitates the integration of knowledge into these sites, along with, personal reflections and experiences, enabling the ability for the public to confront the past macabre (Administrator 2015).

However, the disagreement between recollection and commercialisation in 'Dark Tourism' is brought to focus by the way a historical site such as Auschwitz is represented in images and other forms of media. This "uneasy relationship" where the public's fetishisation with calamity and death can dominate over the true meaning of the site and what it represents, the educational components and the memorialisation (Light 2017)

Malcolm Foley and John Lennon are two of the few academics and researchers that argue, places like this function like "portals" into collective mourning, bringing visitors into an equal and integrated space which provides opportunities for both personal reflection and communal commemorations (Foley and Lennon 2007a).

Authors who have written and documented about the ethical implications, of areas that constitute with reflection of profound loss, involving 'Dark Tourism' sites, should be encouraging the memory of the place rather than striving for profit.

*Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-Human Landscape* by author Cal Flynn, gives her audience an insight into themes of ecological and environmental resilience and regeneration, human impact and memory, and philosophical reflection on abandonment. Her investigations can emphasize the profound insights into environmental resilience, addressing and understanding of the ecological recovery, dark tourism and the philosophical consequences of human abandonment.

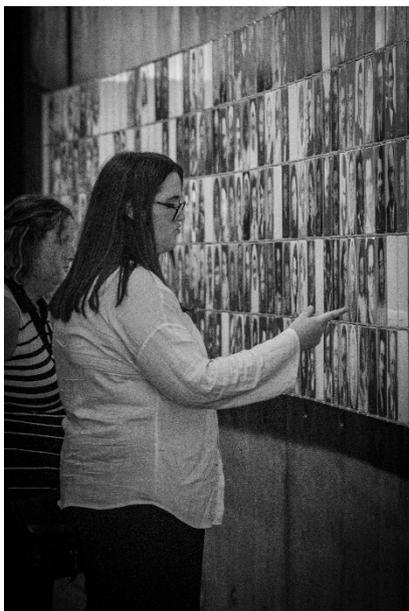
The profound impact and strong influence of the physical historical locations, and along with thoughtful storylines, demonstrate the public memory can be carefully interacted by visitors. By studying the portrayals of Auschwitz in the media and in individual photographs, we might find that these locations promote the ongoing discussion on remembrance and historical accountability.

## 2.2: The Symbolism of Oradour-Sur-Glane as a memorial site.

Following on from '1.2 Academic Perspectives on Dark Tourism', Oradour-Sur-Glane, the small but busy French town that has a melancholy history. The devastating scene of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1944, four days after the D-Day Landings in Normandy of World War II, a horrific massacre. Men, women and children separated, the men moved to the barns and accused of hiding weapons and ammunition, 240 women and 205 children, squished into the local church, then systematically and brutally killed by Nazi German Warfffen-SS troopers by machine guns and grenades. Some killed instantly, some injured but then left to suffocate in the fires smoke. The Germans would then proceed to search and kill anything and anyone they see fleeing from the scene. The village was raided and set alight leaving it, to this day, in rubble, and decay. There were only six survivors who escaped from the tragedy of this day, one of them being Robert Hebras himself. The book *The Slaughter of Our Village* is a powerful insight into what happened that day.

*“For the thousands of visitors who discover its ruins, Oradour-Sur-Glane will remain the frozen image of death, of the horror of war in the absolute, when man abandons himself without remorse to the savagery of his hatred.”* - Andre Desourteaux and Robert Hebras.

According to the Bordeaux Trial, January to February 1953, the number of victims that had lost their lives was 642, but in the book written by Andre Desourteaux and Robert Hebras there are 644 victims. This is due to the many different Court Cases and Judgements (Desourteaux and Hebras 2001: 161 - 163). Because of this massacre, Oradour-Sur-Glane has become a “Martyred Village”. Now being preserved as an important symbol of the calamity of war. Serving as a tribute to those who lost their lives that day as well as a poignant example of the importance of memorialization is to ‘Dark Tourism’.



Continuing on with the exhibition of *Oradour Faces* (Atelier 144, 2014), an exhibition project which provides anyone who walks through into the village of Oradour-Sur-Glane, to connect with the individuals who lost their lives on this fateful day. This on-going exhibition shifts the experience from a passive observation to an active reflection to each of the individual victims. The portraits of these individuals force the visitors who walk through to stop and think about who each person was like, their personality and job, what their family was like.

Figure 4: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glane, France, *Oradour Faces Exhibition*.

Bridging the gap between the past and the present, this project embodies the ethical responsibility of creating awareness and empathy at a ‘Dark Tourism’ site, the exhibition itself emphasises the importance of humanising the victims and not putting them as a number.

Overall, the village of Oradour-Sur-Glance becomes a study case example of the ethics in ‘Dark Tourism’, advocating a sensitive and educational approach to address the brutality and violence of the events, commemorating the people who lost their lives as well as confronting the violent people behind this tragedy.



Figure 5: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glance, France.

### 2.3: Photographic Contributes to memorial sites

The use of photography and its contributing factors to memorial sites can be beneficial for the historical and emotional essence of the location. A singular image can capture interpret and communicate to so many people and communities. Photographers such as Anton Kusters (Kusters 2018) and Simon Norfolk (Norfolk 2002) showcase this in their works, both sharing insights into how deep the aftermath of tragedy and loss can be, even though their work is very different, the messages they send through these images can become a powerful tool. Their work can trigger feelings and recollection, turning a location, they have captured into a place where introspection, remembering and teaching occur. There are demonstrations of moral compassion for potential photography in ‘Dark Tourism’, documenting and sharing both apparent and invisible traces of the past.

Comparably, *The Blue Skies Project* by Anton Kusters (2018), is an imaginative and unique photographic approach to memorialisation. The project showcases the juxtaposition of the tranquillity of nature and the at macabre atrocities committed in former Nazi concentration camps. The initiative exhibition of photos combines the historical events with photos of a blue sky alongside numerical coordinates, taken from the scene of misery and death. Kusters’

imagery pushes his audience to consider and reflect the difference between the past and present while also addressing moral questions regarding the interactions and memory of the historical locations of severe tragedy. Anton Kusters photographic project reflects on the impermanence of memory (Kusters 2018).

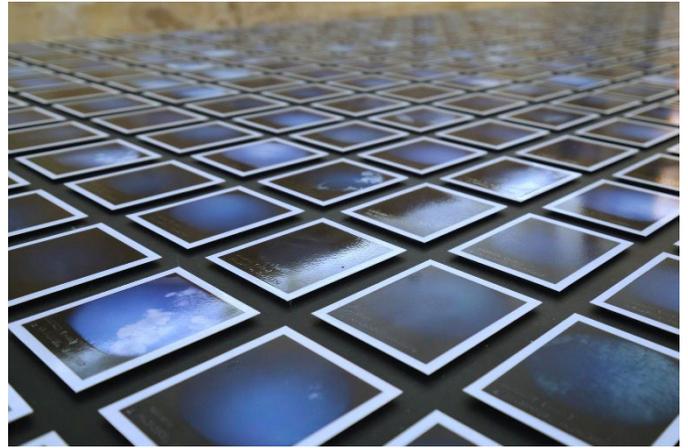


Figure 6: Anton Kusters 2018, *The Blue Skies Project*.

Simon Norfolk's series *Afghanistan: Chronotopia* (2002) captures and examines the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan. Norfolk used the ruins and the landscape as symbols and metaphors for both the struggle and the resilience. Afghanistan is used as a location for "chronotope" – a historical location that is a timeless significance, showcasing the enduring effects of both people and landscape in war. Norfolk turns his photographs from the straightforward representations of destruction into potent portrayals of endurance and commemoration. Norfolk's ultimate objective through his photography of Afghanistan, is to engage with his audiences with history in a way that fosters empathy and awareness, which is compatible and in accordance with 'Dark Tourism'. As opposed to establishing Afghanistan as a "war zone", Simon Norfolk exposes the human cost of war and challenges his views to think about the consequences of conflict and the burden of suffering it causes (Norfolk 2002).

Both Anton Kusters and Simon Norfolk's photographic contributions work together as a strong and effective act of remembrance, giving a range of perception that surpasses the actual characteristics of a memorial location. While Kusters *The Blue Skies Project* obliges his audience to consider the weight of memory and the passing of time, Norfolk's



*Afghanistan: Chronotopia* on the other hand provokes his audience to contemplate on the legacy of war. Collectively, their photographic work draws attention to how photography can contribute to a memorial site, to honour the past tragedy, underlining the reality and truth that photography is more than just beautiful compositions, they enable a better understanding of a memorial place in the context of 'Dark Tourism'.

Figure 7: Simon Norfolk 2002, *Afghanistan: Chronotopia*

## Chapter 3: Symbolism and Compassion in Photographs of Dark Tourism

### 3.1: The Power of Symbolic Imagery in Memorial Photography

Extending beyond the simple reporting of ‘Dark Tourism’, photography offers an additional dimension and level of significance that can entice viewers to look further and establish a connection with a historical locations sense of emotion. By its own nature, ‘Dark Tourism’ is infused with memories and stories of suffering and loss and using photography as a symbol of documentary. Chloe Dewe Mathews, delivers and provides her viewers with more than just visual records, her work is a symbol of the unspoken parts of history, capturing locations associated with historical pain, evoking the unsaid stories to come to light. Mathew’s project *Shot at Dawn* illustrates a select few locations that is connected to soldiers who were executed for desertion during World War I. Her approach to these horrific events is not to use graphic imagery, but to focus on the desolate and lonely landscapes within the dawn of a morning. Mathew’s presentation of these areas is a witness to a historical event that has unfortunately been silenced and erased by time. Such an approach made by Mathews, that challenges spectators to face the multifaced feelings of loss, remorse, and the historical silence these soldiers had to experience.

The absence and memory are intertwined within symbolism of Mathew’s photographic project. *Shot at Dawn* is an indirect testimony, where viewers can visit a location without directly witnessing the outcomes of human suffering, in comparison with the typical war photograph that can depict a scene of violence or destruction. Audiences are encouraged to visualise in their minds what this person could look like or what they did and to sympathise with that individual. By sensitively connecting her viewers of today’s society to the untold historical events, symbolises not only honour to the soldiers who lost their lives, but the seriousness of this particular subject matter that has been forgotten over time. Things such as light, time of day and seasonal changes play and represent a huge part of Chole Dewe Mathews’ images, the composition which contrasts strikingly with the loss and disruption reflect the executions and convey the peaceful durability of the natural world (Mathews 2015).

Figure 8: Chloe Dewe Mathews 2015,  
*Shot at Dawn*,  
“*Soldat Alphonse Brosse, Soldat Jean Boursaud, 07:00 / 10.10.1914 Ambleny, Aisne, Picardie*”



Another indirect symbolic method can be found in Susan Sontag's book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Sontag 2013). Sontag observes the ethical ramifications of looking at pictures of pain, contending that photography has a strong ethical element, specifically when it depicts trauma. Although Sontag believes that images can evoke a sense of empathy, they can also have the opposite effect and desensitise the underlining meaning as well as the viewers if not handled carefully. Moreover, Mathews' photography avoids sensationalism, using resonance of landscapes in a symbolic manner to entice viewer to interact with historical grief in a deeper and respectful way. Chloe Dewe Mathews' photographic exhibition *Shot at Dawn* and Susan Sontag's book *Regarding the Pain of Others* reflect each other in the identification about the sensationalised depictions of violence and encourages viewers to think introspectively, enabling them for a more thoughtful approach to trauma, memory and 'Dark Tourism'.

### 3.2: Catalysts: Photography and Historical Empathy

One of the essentials for promoting historical empathy is photographers. *Shot at dawn* is an exemplary potent emotional and informative photographic series that can enable an audience to face history with empathy. As a viewer, being put into a space metaphorically where an image can testify a silent story is a powerful feeling, Mathews uses this to her advantage without utilising overt or explicit imagery. Susan Sontag refers this to "ethical responsibility", instead of diminishing the effect, the lack of graphic photographic material forces an audience to consider the larger emotional and historical significance that it holds at the moment in time.

Susan Sontag and her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* accentuate the intricacy of this engagement. She contends the photographs that capture a past suffering, compels an audience viewing the image to take on the role of witness. This gives them, the viewer, a sense of moral obligation to remember and honour the past. Photographer Chloe Dewe Mathews bridges the divide between historical events and modern viewers, eliciting an active response from viewers by withholding obvious anguish. The photographs of the landscapes she has captured are delicate and subtle, that they become places of remembrance, compelling viewers to picture the tragedies and lives that had been taken there. Through Mathews' lens, these locations serve as a memory for the past and stimulants for continuing reflection and dialogue regarding war, justice and memory.

Sontag (2013) further argues that exposing viewers to some forms of horrific imagery repeatedly might cause emotional fatigue and desensitisation, which can dilute the potential impact of the image. In this regard, Mathews' method of indirect representation, acts as a countermeasure to this phenomenon. Mathews helps prevent the risks of desensitisation and



spectacle by using moderation and symbolism speak in place of explicit scenes. This experience allows for a contemplative encounter that supports Sontag's desire for more responsible representation. The project *Shot at Dawn* purposefully invites viewers in a way that honours the memory of those impacted while also creating and fostering a space for reflection (Mathews 2015) (Sontag 2013).

Figure 9: Chloe Dewe Mathews 2015, *Shot at Dawn*, "Private Joseph Byers, Private Andrew Evans, Time unknown / 6.2.1915 Private George E. Collins, 07:30 / 15.2.1915 Six Farm, Loker, West-Vlaanderen"

### 3.3 Comparative Evaluation of the Ethics of Memorial Photography

In order to portray any historical trauma that honours the subject or the individual, the ethical representation is essential in 'Dark Tourism'. In Susan Sontag's book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Sontag 2013) she observed that when used appropriately, photographs of suffering can increase empathy and understanding while simultaneously posing issues with voyeurism and desensitization. The work of photographers Anton Kusters (Kusters 2018), Chloe Dewe Mathews (Mathews 2015), and Simon Norfolk (Norfolk 2002) show a variety yet deliberate approaches to depicting trauma, each using distinct visual techniques that in some way relate to Sontag's ideas.

To recap, Anton Kuster's photographic project *The Blue Skies Project* employs indirect symbolism by taking photographs of the unclouded blue sky over the historical sites of the former concentration camps. His method creates a strong and abstract sense of absence by turning the attention of a well-known historical site to the grandeur of the sky. This portrayal can reinforce Sontag's argument that taking a powerful image doesn't have to be overly depicting suffering in order for the image to have an impact. While avoiding possible voyeurism that can come with exhibiting horrific locations, Kuster's photographic work

evokes an emotional response by using the sky as a symbol for the lives lost. His use of abstraction invites his audience and any viewer to consider the unseen memories stored in these locations without sensationalising the suffering, honouring the magnitude of events as well as the dignity of the victims themselves.

Similarly, *Shot at Dawn* by Chole Dewe Mathews is an example of a restrained approach to representation. Her straightforward depictions of bleak landscapes where soldiers were put to death for abandonment during World War I are compelling.

Through the use of overt visual clues of suffering, Mathews encourages her audience to participate sympathetically. This approach aligns with Sontag's ethical concerns, using restraining techniques, viewers can envision the past rather than confront it directly. Avoiding the possibility of desensitisation that Sontag cautions against with repeated exposure to violent imagery, Mathews landscapes transform into places of recollection that permit

a space of memory.



Figure 10: Anton Kusters 2018, *The Blue Skies Project*

Figure 11: Chloe Dewe Mathews 2015, *Shot at Dawn*, "Private James Crozier, 07:05 / 27.2.1916 Le Domaine des Cordeliers, Mailly-Maillet, Picardie"

In contrast, Simon Norfolk's photographs of war-torn landscapes in *Afghanistan: Chronotopia* provides a more direct representation of the remains. His photographs depict the ruins of war as a permanent reminder of human aggression, capturing the tangible signs of devastation. Unlike Kuster's and Mathews abstract photographs, Norfolk's photos enable his viewers to visually address historical pain. By utilising such a direct approach poses unique ethical challenges in particular with Sontag's concerns in the relation of viewer desensitisation. By focusing on context and capturing remnants rather than direct human suffering, Norfolk can reduce these concerns. His viewers are encouraged to face the lasting effects of conflict and cultivates a feeling of historical responsibility. Norfolk's photographic work can support Sontag's contention that morally produced visuals can deter the passive consumption and encourage critical participation.

Each of these photographers offer a unique perspective on how trauma and memory can be appropriately depicted when they capture their approaches to the ethics of representation. Although Kuster's and Mathews photographic projects use a metaphorical and abstract approach to provoke thought without using overt imagery, Norfolk's photographic project depicts vivid ruins, enabling a more direct interaction with the effects of violence. Sontag's Theory offers a basis for comprehension of the ethical function for each strategy: Mathews and Kusters steer clear of open conflict in order to elicit silent empathy, whereas Norfolk's aggressive yet polite approach serves as a reminder of human fortitude in the face of devastation. All three photographers manage to avoid exploitation and spectacle, embodying and reflecting Sontag's belief that photography is a tool, that when used attentively, respects the people and narratives it depicts.



Figure 12: Simon Norfolk 2002, *Afghanistan: Chronotopia*

Integrating these many strategies and methods becomes evident that ethical representation has no set formula for moral depiction in 'Dark Tourist' photography. From the blue skies of Kuster's, and the bleak landscapes of Mathews, to the ruins of Norfolk, all provide unique possibilities for spectators to interact with traumatic pasts. By adopting a technique that complements their subject and style of photography, each photographer complies with Sontag's call for accountability and produces works that awaken empathy and educate. Together as a whole, they all show how photography can effectively support memorialisation by involving spectators in a way that respects the past and preserves the dignity of its memory.

## Chapter 4: Photography's Role as Interpreter, Witness, and Educator in Dark Tourism

### 4.1 Photography's Role in Collective Memory, Interpretation.

The way that 'Dark Tourism' destinations are interpreted by the public is greatly influenced by photographs, which can serve as an ethical participation tool as well as a witness to past pain. By making intentional decisions, photographers such as Anton Kusters (Kusters 2018), Chloe Dewe Mathews (Mathews 2015), and Simon Norfolk (Norfolk 2002) create stories that go beyond simple documentation, encouraging public contemplation and the creation of collective memory. *The Blue Skies Project* by Kusters uses symbolic abstraction to examine Nazi concentration camps without using overt visual cues of tragedy. Mathews' *Shot at Dawn* series evokes empathy by using bleak surroundings to narrate the memories of forgotten World War II soldiers. Norfolk's *Afghanistan: Chronotopia* documents the aftermath of conflict through photos of devastation and resiliency, stands in contrast to the abstract methods of Anton Kuster and Chole Dewe Mathews. Susan Sontag theory of ethical representation is in line with these methods as they promote thoughtful answers. These photographers provide as an example of the moral need to portray traumatic places and the significance of polite interactions.

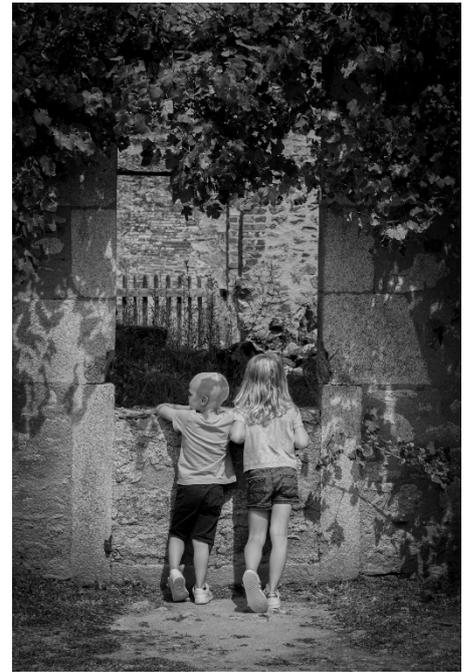
As active observers, the audience is also subject to the ethical obligations of photographers. In the opinions of Susan Sontag and Duncan Light (2017) viewing photographs entails a duty to treat them with dignity in order to avoid trivialisation or voyeurism. By carefully handling and interacting with these photos, viewers take part in the moral portrayal of 'Dark Tourism' destinations and get an understanding of the significance of memory and the weight of history.

### 4.2 Photography's Role in Education.

Beyond its role in interpretation and ethical witnessing, photography in 'Dark Tourism' has a lot of significant educational potential. 'Dark Tourism' can be a potent educational tool that engages even with younger audiences with theme of history, empathy and moral reflection, according to Israfilova and Khoo-Lattimore (2019). They point out that even if some parts of 'Dark Tourism' are unsettling, they assist audiences, including children, learning the historical truths and difficult concepts like loss and resiliency. Photography is a useful teaching tool that can promote reflective learning because of its capacity to capture and communicate the historical and emotional significance of 'Dark Tourism' destinations (Israfilova and Khoo-Lattimore 2019).

Figure 13: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glance, France

The exhibition at Oradour-Sur-Glance, *Oradour Faces*, is an example that can enable visitors to establish a visual and emotional connection with those who lost their lives in the sad incident, transforming their experience from one of active education. Similarly, viewers are prompted by Mathews and Kuster's work to contemplate the real experiences of individuals impacted by previous traumas. Such images bridge the gap between historical events and audiences today by educating and memorialising viewers on an intellectual and emotional level.



Thus, photography challenges tourists to interact with tough history while transforming 'Dark Tourism' destinations into places of introspection and education. These photographs, when carefully chosen, encourage a thoughtful and moral interaction with the past, supporting the claim made by Israfilova and Khoo-Lattimore (2019) that 'Dark Tourism' destinations might serve as teaching resources for historical empathy. With the help for photographers like Kusters, Mathews and Norfolk, 'Dark Tourism' photography offers an experience of the past that goes beyond simple observation, allowing spectators to interact with meaningful and moral witnessing, communal memory, and the long-lasting effects of historical trauma.



Figure 14: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glance, France

## Conclusion

To sum up, this research has examined the intricate and dynamic connection between memorialisation and 'Dark Tourism'. By reframing 'Dark Tourism', it has looked at how historical locations associated with sorrow and suffering might be used for contemplative teaching and remembrance rather than just being places for tourist. Beyond the criticisms of commodification, this study made the case that 'Dark Tourism' destinations serve as conduits for historical memory and offer important teaching opportunities about past catastrophes. This investigation has focused heavily on the function of photography, demonstrating how photos can connect audiences from the past and present.

Photographs by creators such as Anton Kusters (Kusters 2018), Chloe Dewe Mathews (Mathews 2015), and Simon Norfolk (Norfolk 2002) have demonstrated how images may convey the emotional resonance that presents in these locations in addition to the tangible traces of grief. They encourage viewers to reflect carefully on the ethical and historical aspects of memory through symbolic imagery.

Within this research, the moral implications of memorialisation and 'Dark Tourism' have remained paramount. The research reinforces Susan Sontag's view on responsible witnessing in photography by underlining the fine line that must be drawn between depicting historical tragedy and avoiding sensationalism or desensitization. Photographers such as Mathews and Kusters approach these locations with restraint, allowing the landscapes to communicate silently but with poignant messages. In contrast, Norfolk's direct portrayal of the aftermath of war elicits a different kind of reflective engagement.

With findings that places may promote historical empathy, especially among younger audiences, the educational value of 'Dark Tourism' destinations was further emphasised. According to research by Israfilova and Khoo-Lattimore (2019), 'Dark Tourism' can be a powerful teaching tool that fosters moral thought and awareness if handled sensitively. This is best demonstrated by Oradour-Sur-Glane, Oradour Faces, which humanises victims and changes visitors' experiences from passive observation to active remembrance.

My concept of 'Dark Tourism' and memorialization was greatly impacted by my trip to Oradour-Sur-Glane. Walking through, paying attention on things that inspire memory and absence, and documenting how other visitors interact with the surrounding derelict buildings. Particularly emotional was the Oradour Faces exhibition, which turned the visit into an intimate meeting of history. My goal was to capture the village's message of remembrance and respect the site's solemnity through my images.

Ultimately, this dissertation promotes ‘Dark Tourism’ as a way to turn locations of historical sorrow into areas for ethical contemplation, education, and meaningful interaction. Visitors are guided to approach these locations with empathy and respect by photography, which can act as a moral witness and interactive tool. ‘Dark Tourism’ can be extremely important to maintain collective memory and making sure that the lessons of history are remembered by future generations by encouraging a thoughtful and respectful engagement with historical tragedy.

The label ‘Dark Tourism’ needs be amended to "Remembrance Tourism."



Figure 15: Neve Fallon 2024, Oradour-Sur-Glane, France, *Oradour Faces Exhibition*.

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