As I type these words in order to awake, out of time, and arrest, temporarily in text, examples of performances I have seen, of moments I have experienced, I engage the mechanisms of memory. Whether a memory from an hour ago or a year, it is one that serendipitously gathers up impressions, the impressions of a spectator. How many memories do we have, do they cohabit peacefully, does one push ahead of the other falsifying its importance? Is the working of memory evocative of the famed rooms of the palace articulated by Frances Yates; do we still conceive of our memory as a motion in and out of rooms, of corridors? Or are our memories now adjusted by information received in the centuries since the 15th, the text-dependent culture Elizabeth Eisenstein describes, or by the modern, breathless copia possible through the flick of an idea onto a screen, named, saved and forgotten on an ever expanding pin drive—how many angels can dance on the head of that pin?

How does the memory of the performance I have seen surface through the strange entity of a shared cultural memory, the memory made by a national way of looking, the memory made from the experience of spectating with others? That
stubborn silt Judith Butler named the “sediment of gendered expectations” in her 1990 analysis of performance and gender still tugs at the spectator’s feet as she manoeuvres her way through a spectacle performed before her. Such assumptions that make for the ground of assuming also include among them national identity, age, education, race, class. What can be experienced as fluid and at times immaterial to the witness herself, can as suddenly be attributed to her, an attribution that weights what was in motion, tying it to a category and tying it to the collection of characteristics making up that category.

As when Frank Castorf implies in his frenetic and hammering version of *Streetcar Named Desire* renamed *Endstation America*, ‘Yo! You American in the seventh row, 15th seat, this is what you are like, here’s America.’ And I observe myself becoming more and more agitated, noting my discomfort with surprise since I am so habitually a fierce critic of my country: haunted by the harried Williams who could no more be said to speak for or represent something monolithically ‘American’ than could any effete, Southern boy born of a disappointed belle. The violent isolation in the staging and the triumphal narcissism castigates the US—it is 2003 and castigation only seems just. Yet here again the question of memory and the practice of spectating conjoin: my past with my own complexly Southern belle mother; my surprise at my defensive protection of the work of an outsider to the American way being used as if it signified the work of an insider; my surprise at the sudden, sheer pleasure of Williams’ extravagant words—a pleasure resurrected only in aural memory since this production was in German with surtitles in Italian—at a time when most performance texts as if bowing to the current
distrust of text-based theatre risked only the shortest words and briefest sentences possible.

How many things, I reflect here, go on when we watch, particularly when the watching comes from an itinerant
movement, corporeal but not only. Of the activity of that semi-
conscious wanderer, the *flâneur*, Walter Benjamin writes, “it is
the creation of Paris.” (263. v.2) A digression follows—Benjamin’s
writing performs the incidental turnings of the *flâneur’s*
wandering feet by demarcating his own prose alleyways—the
“wonder is that it was not Rome.” Delineating things Roman
from things Parisian, Benjamin sees Rome as a landscape of
temples and cordoned off shrines to the past; he decides that
“the great reminiscences, the historical *frissons*—these are all so
much junk to the *flâneur*, who is happy to leave them to the
tourist.” A *flâneur* “would be happy to trade all his knowledge of
artists’ quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces for the scent
of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile—that
which any old dog carries away” (263).

At work in the romance of the *flâneur* and of the implied
anthropomorphism of Rome and Paris—two coordinates
in the map of great European cities, one I inhabit, the other
in which I act the *flâneur*—is a memory. Or perhaps here
more precisely what Joe Roach has reanimated as a kind of
performance uncanny: a spectator/*flâneur* in the cartographical
space of playing participates in a space of exchange that is “an
improvisational behavior space” where “memory reveals itself
as imagination” (1996, 29). Because memory also retrieves what
has not been stored. Those weathered thresholds invite more
itinerant travel not because they are familiar but because they
encourage a dreaming, to use Benjamin’s sleepwalking term for
the *flâneur* activity par excellence, of what we could not know but
strangely do recognize. What Fred Moten by way of Nathaniel
Mackey might call an ‘insistent previousness,’ one with as mixed
an unacknowledged heritage, as troubled a moment to moment
present among those whose ruins these were, whose ruins these are and who might yet be coming to camp among them (55).

In this work you are reading, the old dog and the tile play their parts. A recollection of performances gathered because of the particular yellow on the corner of that tile, the way a corner of the stage will allow for something that resists forgetting, indeed will sometimes expect to be appreciated, touched, seen beyond just the first glance of a passer by, collected, shaped by contemplation into a communicated memory. The satisfactions of the itinerant spectator and her fellow travelers will never be those of comprehensive accounts, an honorable method that would seek to account for a large body of work by one company, or to analyze a pattern of social import deduced from a plan to see a certain set of performances in a certain place at a certain time.

For example here in these pages the activity of watching given the place of the seeing might suggest the character of those things and persons we collect under the term ‘European.’ At its most crude, the reference can conjure something falsely tangible like a sports event with fans: ideas dressed in a kind of intellectual football jersey for a team called Sophistication and its squad of famous players, where indeed Benjamin’s retired uniform holds pride of place. Partly one can say these impressions can only hold true for a certain educated Western spectator or her readers. At present the complications of time and history across the landscape of that sedimented assumption that is the European splash new colors of paint—Polish and Romanian—and creative gobs of waste—constitutional confusion and threatened treaties—across the weathered threshold, not to mention what follows the activities of the dog. But what comes into the performance space with an itinerant
spectator presented with an itinerant spectacle always mixes imagination revealed as memory with hearsay and longing.

I remember seeing a Valle Inclan play at the Teatro Valle in Rome in 1995. Probably one of the few US professors teaching Valle Inclan outside of a Spanish department, I did so because I was trying to account for the oddities of the geography of Western theatre history. Why do hot spots appear at certain times, on certain continents from the 16th century through to contemporary performance? So Valle Inclan on the syllabus stands for the lost 19th century in Spanish drama, before Lorca rides his foaming horse into view and after Calderon and Lope de Vega have remade the world. Off I went with little Italian and no knowledge of the play to sit among my fellows and watch, glancing up for the few Italian words on the surtitle screen I might have learned in my scant three months in the country.

At the interval, I went to the box office to purchase tickets for Societas Raffaello Sanzio’s production of Giulio Cesare to be performed in November and thus when I would still be in Italy teaching my Michigan students. My stomach knotted a bit on my short walk toward the signora at the biglietteria; I rehearsed my question in Italian in my head. Her face told me what hearsay I had missed, what everyone but I, the itinerant and out of town/out of country spectator, knew. The tickets had sold out within days of going on sale; the event that was the Cesena-based Company arriving in Rome with their version of Shakespeare had been in the ears of the locals weeks before the tickets became available. Thus in my disappointment I added to my list the name of this group and the intention to go and see whatever they were doing wherever I could. The mix of hearsay, accidentally finding out about the wild popularity of the troupe,
and longing, wanting the tickets more for having been thwarted in having them, created a memory and expectation I took to my first performance by Societas Raffaello Sanzio, *Genesi*, in Rome.

What does it mean to record the impressions of an itinerant spectator, those perishable descriptions bound in time and place to, well, time and place? I pose the question thinking not of the wealth of argument about performance documentation and it uses and counter-uses, but of what our stories mean to one another. Of how I might stand on an imagined promontory looking out over several years of performance across countries in Europe and point out land masses, intriguing groupings, startling shifts in the coordinates of sea and sky. Of how the process of my itinerant wanderings begins to instruct me in a practice of *spectating*, a practice that can be as intuitive, cumulative and crafted as that of making performances, of directing and writing. Can I offer you a place beside me to look/to listen with me? Can I bring into focus without delineating too sharply a contour to be shaped anew by you through my rendering, openly? Will you create narratives having to do with identity and categories of exploration by looking, listening, receiving in tandem with me, categories I seek not to define for the very reason that the contours or shapes of the land mass may create different coordinates dependent up on your own spectatorial coordinates? You might see land masses reminiscent of others you know, some representation of mine may awaken a memory of your own. A methodology of suggestion rather than argument, an invitation to look together rather than a flat rendering of the afterimage, the leftover surface of the remembered performance.
A methodology, I might name it and indeed hope to replicate it, of narrative care, tenderly lifting the boiling beaker from the Bunsen burner to place it on the countertop, infinitesimal movements necessary for the discoveries small and grand. W.G. Sebald practices such a methodology in his work, work not in the disciplinary camp of performance studies, but work I propose that models a kind of observing that facilitates reflection on, in his case, observing and history, in mine, being a spectator. The method has the effect of providing textual 3D glasses, a kind of looking that sees the historical dimensions, often flattened when one looks without such an aid, with the added volumes made by memory and interpretation. Thus the reader sees out to the back, over to the side, here close to the face, and can reassemble what he hears or choose where she looks. I might call Sebald’s method a kind of staging of memory, a reanimation with intent, choosing where to exaggerate, where to indicate with a faint nod what those of us reading his hypnotic prose might want to give more attention to for ourselves. I borrow this methodology, one Michael Taussig might call “a love of muted and even defective storytelling”; Taussig claims this kind of storytelling to be a “form of analysis…there has to be a swerve in the writing itself because the writing is the theory and the swerve is what trips up thought in a serpentine world” (vii).

If the flaw in the thinking of our time now, in many cultures now, is reductive response masquerading for critical interpretation—see any segment of news on any major news outlet—then one possible intervention to be made could be that of care, of perceiving and revealing spatial/corporeal volume where the habit is to see as well as hear the doors slamming, another room labeled and shut, another national habit rendered
general and common. One protection against the harm caused by the violent shrinking that is the reductive is the deliberate coaxing of the reduced into a space where it can expand, where care can be taken to invite again a dimensionality, sometimes mysterious and uncategorizable, into tactile view, a ‘view’ made of sound as well as sight. This book offers an itinerant pilgrimage across spectating in Europe during the period of the Union’s expansion and its monetary cohesion. The spectator flâneur having lingered in many weathered thresholds, offers a montage of seeing performances in different places, in different languages, with different companies amongst different audiences, patterns in the ways of receiving and of making. Such patterns disturb by implications, violations, hesitations, confusions; such patterns score the sediment of assumptions or kick up the dried and cracked surface to show newly turned earth. This book invites its reader to cross the weathered thresholds with the particular quality of attention—the kind that comes from a mix of care
and dreaming—Benjamin and Sebald model as a spectator/flâneur at the side of the writer, with her/his own vantage point/vanishing point of memories and recognition to see what has been going on onstage, in performance all over the place all over these years.