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“The Smoke of an Eruption and the Dust of an Earthquake”: Dark Tourism, the Sublime, and the Re-animation of the Disaster Location

Jonathan Skinner

The lightnings around Vesuvius increase in their vivid and scorching glare [...] now of a lurid and intolerable crimson, gushing forth through the columns of smoke, far and wide, and lighting up the whole city from arch to arch—then suddenly dying into a sickly paleness, like the ghost of their own life! (*The Last Days of Pompeii*, Edward George Bulwer-Lytton 1834)

The most curious thing I've seen on my voyage is Pompeii. (*Rome, Naples et Florence*, Stendhal 1826)

Earthquakes and volcanoes are at last claiming, by their very intrusive activity, the attention of observers, who are able to look through the smoke of an eruption, and the dust of an earthquake, at the real geological importance of the terrible demonstration. (*The American Naturalist*, WT. Brigham 1868)

Introducing a Dark and Stormy Tourism

The first quotation above from *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) describes the start of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius on 24 August 79 AD. It is written imaginatively by the popular Victorian writer Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, the gothic novelist who coined the expression “It was a dark and stormy night”. The book uses characters to describe religious and classical

J. Skinner (✉)
University of Roehampton, London, UK

tensions between the Ancients—Glaucus, an Athenian in a Roman seaside resort town, falling in love with Nydia, the sister of a priest worshipping the Egyptian Goddess Isis—all set in a racy context of feasts and seduction in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. The book was an instant bestseller, partly due to its launch just after the eruption of Vesuvius again on 23 August 1834 and partly because it dealt with issues to do with civilisation, colonialism and catastrophe—developing preoccupations of modern urban Victorian Britain. It became a “school of catastrophe” text (Dahl 1953) associated also with the adventure and dystopia writing of the age, but also evolution, extinction and early ecology writing (Scott 2014). This is an extension of what McCormick (1998: 5) describes as the “black visions” of Tennyson and other Victorian writers extending Blake’s lament for a lost rural idyll before the rise of the “dark satanic mills”. It is explained by Ferguson (2013: 2) as a consequence of living through the “radically altered spatial and temporal environment” of the mid- to late nineteenth century and became a reference text for the Grand Tour travellers and visitors who gazed upon Antiquity and pilfered, researched, wrote, painted, and gazed upon the site first explored in the mid-eighteenth century. Readers appreciated the fetishisation of simple landscape. Mary Shelley (1844: 279) found that he had “peopled its silence peopled its desert streets” when she revisited Pompeii in 1843. Londoners empathised with the bustling cosmopolitan “untechnological” Pompeii re-animated by Bulwer-Lytton Pompeii in 1843 after having read the historical novel. Bulwer’s narrative overwrote other versions of visits to “the City of the Dead” as Sir Walter Scott had described it (Lockhart 1838). As such, the site and its stories were reworked and restaged from on-site picnics (Chard 2007) to Pompeiian plays in London’s West End and mass-scale transatlantic “pyrodrama” spectacles with up to 10,000 spectators (St Clair and Bautz 2012: 376), films—over nine films with the title between 1900 and 1950 (Daly 2011: 276)—television comedies (“Up Pompeii”), and even science fiction travels such as Dr Who’s “The Fires of Pompeii” (Hobden 2009). Most recently we have the 2014 film of Robert Harris’s 2003 bestseller *Pompeii* and Mary Beard’s (2008) *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town* and related BBC show “Pompeii: New Secrets Revealed with Mary Beard”. If one cannot visit the site as a traveller, then there are opportunities as a reader and a viewer to reimagine and reconstruct the past (cf. Harper 1993). Failing that one can flirt with danger from a distance with the “faux disaster” ruins one can float past on the “Escape from Pompeii” amusement park ride at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Pompeii is writ large in the contemporary imagination and has held this dramatic status from the French Revolution to post-9/11 Apocalyptic risk-escape. It will continue to attract attention and tourist visits to the foothills of the volcano as well as to the ever-expanding number of related destinations. “Magnificence, mysterious grandeur, divine wrath, and terrific catastrophe, all portrayed on a huge scale, still can be forceful and exciting” suggests Curtis Dahl (1956: 147). The disaster narrative is fetching, compelling, enticing. More recently, Mary Manjikian (2012) refers to this attraction as the “romance of the world’s end”. It has led to the continual repurposing and “remediation” (Ekström 2016) of a Janus-facing Pompeii that gives us insight simultaneously into Antiquity and Apocalypse. There is a seduction to this calamitous aesthetic for the tourist gaze, not dissimilar to the “subtle, corrupting fascination” for Auschwitz identified by Steiner (1971: 30) or for the Ground Zeros that pockmark the globe, each an instantiation of new time, space and body configurations (cf. Feldman 2002). Tourists have an appetite for disaster, horror, and death. The question in this chapter is: in the context of natural disasters, is this a new phenomenon?¹

Visiting Knebworth House, Bulwer-Lytton’s gothic stately home—as well as film set, educational centre, and rock concert venue in Hertfordshire—one finds an exhibition dedicated to the writer and his *The Last Days of Pompeii*. There are memorabilia from his writings and visits to Pompeii, lodestones to the past, gifts and souvenirs from his visits—in particular two skulls of Pompeii’s victims he kept on his writing desk and on display as muses and memento mori (Lazer 2009: 104), a perverse display of real skulls to realise fictional characters (Goldhill 2012). Predating Bulwer-Lytton, dilettante and gothic revivalist Horace Walpole visited Herculaneum in 1740, during what Moorman (2015) refers to as the treasure-hunt phase from 1710 to 1755 before archaeological digs were instituted and extended by 1805. While Bulwer-Lytton was attracted to the historical imagination of the place, and aroused by the curving bosom and nape of the cast of a young woman—an archaeological trace, an erotic imprint re-animating warm flesh from cold ash (Goldhill 2014)—Walpole took away what was unique for him, exotic souvenirs that appealed to his sensibilities. One of his many letters (Walpole 1890[1740]) to his friend Richard West describes his visit to “this reservoir of antiquities”:

Naples, 14 June, 1740

Dear West, – One hates writing descriptions that are to be found in every book of travels; but we have seen something to-day that I am sure you never read of, and perhaps never heard of. Have you ever heard of a subterraneous town? A whole Roman town, with all its edifices, remaining underground?

Don't fancy the inhabitants buried it there to save it from the Goths: they were buried with it themselves; which is a caution we are not told that they ever took. [...] This underground city is perhaps one of the noblest curiosities that ever has been discovered.

Walpole brought home petrified dates that he housed in a small casket in his Tribune room, a shrine-like treasure store for storylines to visitors. His sole comment about them was that “they are burnt to a coal, but the shapes and rivelled skins are entire” (Walpole 1774: 97). They were guarded by a small bronze bust of Caligula with silver eyes. Walpole cooed over it and relished his role as custodian, describing the piece in a guidebook he constructed for visitors to his Strawberry Hill House:

A small bust in bronze of Caligula, with silver eyes. This exquisite piece is one of the finest things in the collection, and shows the great art of the ancients. It is evidently a portrait, carefully done, and seems to represent that Emperor at the beginning of his madness. (Walpole 1774: 87)

Bulwer-Lytton modelled partly himself upon this dilettante writer. This curiosity-collecting habit is also found in Sir Walter Scott, Bulwer's contemporary, who mixed his curiosities, taking flags, body armour, and buttons as souvenirs from the site of the battle of Waterloo in 1815 (a month after Wellington's great victory) and exhibiting them back home alongside Napoleon's blotting paper and pen tray, a lock of Nelson's hair, Rob Roy's purse, and two model cast skulls of Robert the Bruce and a Guardsman from Waterloo. Goldhill suggests that writers such as these have a competitive and perverse relationship with the past that lies somewhere between archaeological record and the historical fictions of their novels, “the materiality of the real against the nonreferentiality of fiction” (Goldhill 2012: 112). Bulwer-Lytton was given his skulls by scientist, Vesuvius scholar, traveller, and guide John Auldjo that they might become a part of Knebworth's shrine to posterity:

I know they will be taken and probably remain undisturbed for ages at Knebworth, where, perhaps, they may be found by Macaulay's New Zealander, when Knebworth House will be visited as one of the shrines of England. (Cited in Goldhill 2012: 97)

All three writers' houses have become popular contemporary tourist attractions. On a recent tour of Knebworth, given by current heir Henry Lytton-Cobbold, the skulls are still on display, labelled and named. Scott's “conundrum castle” can be visited as a site of national interest in Scotland. And Walpole's Strawberry Hill

House, though now empty of possessions after a bankruptcy sale in 1842, is a popular tourist attraction for the gothic imagining tourist. I volunteer as a room steward in the now empty Tribune room, watching tourists reconstruct the room in their imagination: where Caligula's silver eyes gazed and how the Walpole cabinet, now sitting in room 118a, case six of the Victoria and Albert Museum, might have looked in the centre wall of the room near the Japanese box of Roman dates. Tourists piece together a version of the past, curious about the curiosities formerly exhibited. Walpole, Scott, and Bulwer-Lytton, each in their own right romantic chroniclers, fêted the theatrical and atmospheric and have maintained the interests of readers and visitors across the centuries.

The medium for viewing Pompeii has changed from historical novel to Hollywood blockbuster, from newspaper report to science fiction episode or documentary. Equally, the demography of those visiting and the mode of transport that conveys them have changed from encounters by horse-drawn carriages to "flying visit" in a coach tour party. Nevertheless, the nature of the attractions to Pompeii remains the same. The motivations to tour, to visit, to be educated and experienced, and to understand the catastrophe and the past lives of its victims have changed little. The reconstructions at work in the visitors' imaginations endure, prompted by the marketing that stimulates and frames their expectations (Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011), which has been called by Leite the commodification of collective "tourism imaginaries ... those shared, composite images of place and people" (2014: 264). There is also, perhaps, an unchanged relief in the safe, return home with a touch of *schadenfreude*, which has recently been linked to a Freudian death drive (*thanatos*) by Buda (2015). *Plus, ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Some things are timeless, especially the personal experience that travel affords articulated in the eighteenth-century quip made by William Bennet, Cambridge Don and Bishop of Cloyne: "Travellers always buy experience which no books can give" (Black 1999: 301).

Natural Catastrophe and the Sublime

Tourists have long been attracted to grand telluric forces and their impact from the eruptions of Vesuvius and its creation of Pompeii, to the religious fires and tsunami floods following the great earthquake of Lisbon on All Saint's Day, 1755. This "catastrophism" was international, killing upwards of 10,000 local citizens by fire, flood, and quake (Aguirre 2012). Humans repurpose events, establish meaning over them, and draw equations between them. Here is Clarence King (1877: 460), the first director of the US Geological Survey:

If poor, puny little Vesuvius could immortalize itself by burying the towns at its feet, if the feeble energy of a Lisbon earthquake could record itself on the grave-stones of thousands of men, then the volcanic period in Western America was truly catastrophic. Modern vulcanism, is but the faint, flickering survival of what was once a world-wide and immense exhibition of telluric energy, one whose distortions and dislocations of the crust, whose deluges of molten stone, emissions of mineral dust, heated waters, and noxious gases could not have failed to exert destructive effect on the life of considerable portions of the globe.

An anonymous article in US art magazine *The Aldine*, “Loitering around Lisbon” (Anon. 1872), addresses Grand Tour tourism to Lisbon in the same period as seen through the eyes of William Beckford (1760–1844), a wealthy inheritor, letter writer, and gothic revivalist aping Horace Walpole; he once described Walpole’s residence as a “a gothic mousetrap” (Melville 1910: 299). The article is built around Beckford’s (1835) two-volume Grand Tour, *Italy; with Sketches Of Spain and Portugal*, a travel memoir written as a diary of his movements (see also Seaton’s introduction to this section). The letter from 30 June 1787 details part of his tour of Lisbon during the glowing, last phases of The Inquisition:

We sallied out after dinner to pay visits. Never did I behold such cursed up-and-downs, such shelving descents and sudden rises, as occur at every step one takes in going about Lisbon. I thought myself fifty times on the point of being overturned into the Tagus, or tumbled into sandy ditches, among rotten shoes, dead cats, and negro beldames, [...] I saw one dragging into light as I passed by the ruins of a palace thrown down by the earthquake. [...] We traversed the city this evening in all its extent in our way to the Duke d’Alafoens’s villa [...] We walked part of the way home by the serene light of the full moon rising from behind the mountains on the opposite shore of the Tagus, at this extremity of the metropolis above nine miles broad. Lisbon, which appeared to me so uninteresting a few hours ago, assumed a very different aspect by these soft gleams. The flights of steps, terraces, chapels, and porticos of several convents and palaces on the brink of the river, shone forth like edifices of white marble, whilst the rough cliffs and miserable sheds rising above them were lost in dark shadows. (Beckford 1835, Letter XVI)

Beckford and other tourists sought out the contrasts between the old Lisbon and the new Lisbon, between the ruined, lost, and dark to the east of the city and the modern, rejuvenated, and “curious medley” of the “distasteful” (Anon. 1872: 44) alongside the river Tagus. These Grand Tourists enjoyed the contrasts of Lisbon, and the drama of the All Saints’ Day narrative nearly 30 years earlier,

an event that caught the imagination of European scholars with debates on humanity and omnipotence, god in nature, and the sublime—all cast through this first global catastrophe of the Enlightenment; Rousseau blamed the victims whereas Voltaire “heard them cry”, to paraphrase moral philosopher Susan Neiman (2004: 138); Kant explained events with recourse to the descriptive sciences (cf. Brightman 1919), and Edmund Burke (1767[1756]: 152) added a “suddenness” to his aesthetics of the sublime. They also sought out the English gentry named in the local graveyards (Paice 2008). Prime Minister Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, first Marquis of Pombal, rebuilt the city along secular lines with city squares excluding the church’s pre-quake presence (Walker 2015): a “violent subterranean transformation, both physical and philosophical” in the City of Death (Hamblyn 2008: 109, 113), still the epicentre for The Inquisition with its buried dungeons. Hamblyn (2008: 114) continues: “[i]t was as though Lisbon had been built and rebuilt over a pit of horrors, to which the earthquake had given concrete geophysical expression.” Science trumped theodicy in Lisbon, and the visitors were drawn to the city they had read about and seen inked as disaster images in their newspapers—a print capitalism aesthetics of distant disaster spectators that precipitates not just tourism but also a cosmopolitan sense of commonality that lies at the heart of universal human rights according to Sharon Sliwinski (2011). Taking a leaf from Adorno, Neiman (2004: xvi) suggests that the Lisbon earthquake—Goethe’s (1848: 19) “demon of terror”—became the equivalent for us “moderns” of Auschwitz, a *Zeitgeist* shock, the sublime as collective trauma, that taken together bookend the beginning and the end of the modern period. These moral aftershocks are with us today with the meaning of the Lisbon earthquake heralding a sublime environment that is neither God’s nor God’s gift. They have influenced the disaster tourists of yore and continue to influence them today on spectacular volcanic disaster islands such as Montserrat and Santorini.

Enlightenment figures—enthralled by a mix of fear and fascination—described the Lisbon earthquake as “sublime”, an emotional response to the immensity of forces at play around them. Like Pompeii, the natural disaster has a dramatic human dimension to it. And, like Pompeii, the “natural” disaster was restaged for the curious Victorian public. The Colosseum Theatre in London’s Regent’s Park ran a successful—if controversial—show production, *Cyclorama of Lisbon Before and After the Earthquake in 1755* (see Chap. 4) that “dazzled” and “frightened the senses” of even William Thackeray (1899: 177) with the crashing of buildings, shrieks of the dying, flashes, and thunder assaulting his senses. Kant was influenced by the quake in his third critique that sought to develop an analytical understanding of human response to the

magnitude and might of nature, to that which is “absolutely great” (2000[1790]: 131), surpassing measure of the senses and hence becoming something that we fear. It haunts the text as a “negative presentation” (Ray 2004: 10), dark and unfathomable, present by not being mentioned. To generalise, the Kantian sublime is thus uncontainable, dynamic, exciting, violent—as in the examples in this chapter—and scary. Read through a Marxist lens, this “negative pleasure” (Kant 2000: 129; cf. Burke’s “negative pain”), the sublime is, as Gene Ray (2004: 6) appositely phrases it, “a ‘manly’ solution” to the problem of the beautiful with its feminine associations. With the sublime, the romantic—and bourgeois—traveller could, and still can, contemplate the awesomeness of nature, its thrills, and spills but without feeling effeminate.

Ray comments further on the implications for the scientific and literary naming—this new-found appreciation in spectators near and far. To describe, to visit, to tour is to represent, to commodify, to take control. Disaster tourism domesticates. For Ray, again, the sublime is central to this transition: “through the power of reason and its moral law, the great evil of natural catastrophe is elevated, transfigured and ‘sublimed’ into a foil for human dignity” (Ray 2004: 11). Contra Ray, Heringman suggests that the natural disaster is beyond domestication, just as it is beyond comprehension for it to be sublime. Volcano and earthquake are alien processes to us. They are, in fact, Other—wild nature to be mediated through metaphor or aesthetic medium such as poetry or art; the spewing volcano suffers us with its painful birth pang. The earthquake catastrophe is understood through the lens of the religious as a curse, the secular as sublime, the new discipline of the geological scientist as seismic. And so we colonise the formerly uncertain and incomprehensible through hyperbole. The sublime is just one of these tropes to mediate our experiences. Literary critic Noah Heringman (2003: 97) articulates this through natural philosopher Humphrey Day’s declaration that the volcanoes are “the most sublime of the phenomena belonging to our globe” before going on to note that the earthquake also represents topical issues of the day to people (2003: 98). Earthquake and volcano narratives have an evanescence about them; the earth convulses with us as human witnesses before we die and/or are buried.

How, then, do the large-scale disasters and catastrophes such as the eruptions of Italy’s Vesuvius, Greece’s Santorini, and Montserrat’s Soufriere Hills—not to mention Japan’s Mount Aso, the USA’s Mount St Helens, Iceland’s Eyjafjallajökull, Hawaii’s Kilauea, and many others—square with a niche form of tourism located on the cusp of modernity/post-modernity? These complex events are repurposed for the tourist and by the tourist. But, if dark tourism is “an intimation of post-modernity”, as John Lennon and Malcolm

Foley (2000: 11) declare, then can it be accurately applied to physical events that are outwith living memory and our everyday experience of time? (See Chap. 1.)

From Santorini to Montserrat: Pompeii as a Disaster Tourism Trope

To assess this proposition, I wish to examine two examples where "Pompeii" features as the disaster tourism trope in use. They comprise Santorini, a Greek island and archipelago in the southern Aegean Sea in the Mediterranean, an inhabited remnant of a volcanic caldera; and Montserrat, a British Overseas Territory in the Eastern Caribbean, the site of an on-going eruption in the Soufriere Hills. The issue is as to whether or not these are contemporary dark tourism destinations? Patricia Erfurt-Cooper notes that contemporary tourists are certainly attracted to volcanoes. These volcano tourists are intrigued by temperamental nature around them, often heedless of the risk of explosion, gas poisoning, and burning. She defines the practice as follows:

Volcano tourism involves the exploration and study of active volcanic and geothermal landforms. Volcano tourism also includes visits to dormant and extinct volcanic regions where remnants of activity attract visitors with an interest in geological heritage. (2010a: 3)

It is a niche form of eco- or nature tourism. Visitors are in awe of these exciting but deadly nature shows writ large across the landscape from Hawaii to Iceland. Often the visits are associated with spa trips to thermal springs and mud baths. Some are educational visits to admire and make sense of the geology in progress. Others are historical with a walk-through/sail-around the site of the 1883 eruption of Krakatoa. Writing in their extensive *Volcano and Geothermal Tourism* volume, Erfurt-Cooper (2010b: 148) features the fascinating volcano attractions on the Japanese island of Kyushu where concrete bunkers line the tourist routes as potential shelters should an eruption take place. One of the attractions is a "Buried Village" where 43 died under pyroclastic flows from Mt. Unzen. Locals renarrate their experiences as "a close call" with nature. A memorial hall records the event, quite literally using the reel from a camera found in the debris that contained footage of the pyroclastic flow as it approached the unfortunate spectators. Their last view of the spectacle is replayed to the tourists in a theatre that uses a vibrating floor and hot winds to simulate the pyroclastic flows on 3D large screens in front of them. Artefacts

line a 39-metre glass-enclosed floor with light running through it at 100 km/second speed billed as “the phenomenon itself” (Anon. 2016b). This automated modern show trades off proximity to the site, the authenticity of materials on display (e.g., the camera), the advances in simulated experience for the visitor. The result is what Bell and Lyall (2002) refer to as an “accelerated sublime”, an enhanced kinaesthetic experience of the landscape. This postmodern technology works as an innovative revamping of the historical cyclorama to “(re)activate the sublime” (cf. Bell and Lyall 2002: xii). Theirs is not a passive viewing of geo-nature. It is immersive and disturbing though the plight of the 43 is downplayed in favour of a sensorial engagement with the disaster. You sit watching their fate unfold in front of you just as they did. The disaster is re-animated for you the dark tourist. But you escape when they did not.

Santorini: Bronze Age Pompeii

There are no memorials on Santorini or Montserrat for the deceased. On these islands, the tourists’ motivations are very different. The locations also differ considerably: classical caldera landscape to classic phreatic volcano peak, one a marine site breathtaking in its massive vertiginous heights, the other a contrast between “the green and the gritty” (Skinner 2015)—between the north and the south of the island. One has beauty in its absence, in a crater filled with Mediterranean waters pockmarked by remnants of volcanic activity, with human civilisation clinging to the walls of the caldera and bobbing gently in nature’s new harbour for the cruise ship visitor. The other is an “island-of-extremes” (CTONews 2015) visited by plane that flies over an empty, grey, ashy moonscape till you come to land in the tropical green north, landing near to settlements full of life and contrasting with the dead, part-covered former capital. Both are seen as Pompeiis: Walter Friedrich (2009) describes Santorini as “a bronze age Pompeii” in his book about the island. Writing for a Fox News piece, Blane Bachelor (2014) headlined Montserrat as “a modern-day Pompeii in the Caribbean”. Peter Hohenhaus (2016a), who runs the Dark-Tourism.com website, notes how this location has become a metonym for volcano disasters in general, standing for the entire cluster of eruptions involving the unfortunate loss of life and destruction to property that can be viewed by the visitor:

The word “Pompeii” is often taken as almost a generic term, or as a metonym standing for all kinds of volcanic disasters, esp. of course if they involve some place getting covered in ash or lava. Thus you find expressions such as “a modern-day Pompeii” – as a descriptive term for the former capital of the Caribbean

island Montserrat, Plymouth, which was destroyed in a Soufriere Hills volcano eruption and buried by a pyroclastic flow. Similarly, on Heimaey, Iceland, an excavation project in which houses covered by lava in 1973 are currently being dug up calls itself “Pompei[i] of the North” (which also demonstrates what a marketing asset an association with Pompeii can be...).

Hohenhaus appreciates the temporal dimension in dark tourism, linking the activity with twentieth-century commodification but also recognising that Pompeii has contemporary caché because the Vesuvius volcano is still considered to be dangerous and is by no means extinct. Souvenir hunters continue to seek out their piece of Vesuvius rock from the crater (Karkut 2010: 239). It serves as a lodestone to the past and anchors the tourist to the explosion millennia ago that caused such loss of life. This is what rained down on the poor citizens, a curio for the mantelpiece as a poor match for the aristocrats’ souvenirs from the ruins.

Santorini, a corruption on Saint Irene, is a Greek island 200 km from the mainland, 90 km square in size, and with a population of approximately 15,000. It is also the name for an island archipelago formed from a collapsed volcano caldera measuring 12 km by 7 km. The caldera is water filled, creating a sublime volcano lagoon surrounded by a 1000-foot-high cliff face. The water is 400 m deep, broken by the tops of two volcanoes that formed the small islands Palia and Nea Kameni (Old and New Burnt Island) from past and present eruptions (1600 BC to 1950 with other particular eruptions in 47 AD, 726 AD and 1707). Over half a million tourists visit the islands every year. Tourists visiting by cruise ship enter via the Old Port and take a cable car up the cliffs to the capital Fira. The views and sunsets from there and Oia are considered some of the most spectacular in the world. Volcano tourists can visit the islands and bathe in heated waters. Shops on the main island sell volcano soaps, pumice, ashtrays shaped like a volcanic caldera for cigarette ash to fall in the centre, and postcards of previous eruptions (photographs from 1950, newspaper prints from 1707 and 1866). The tourists have been seduced by the 360-degree visuals online that advertise the islands and the hotels (Anon. 2016b). They are attracted to the site of what is considered to have been the largest volcanic eruption in the world: to the remains of a colossal Minoan eruption approximately 1600 BC that could be heard across three continents, cast a shadow over the Mediterranean and caused global cooling as far as China. Few tourists feel unsafe or consider the volcano site a danger to visit. The fear lies in the altitude of the island towns where tourists perch for photographs, take the cable car journey up the steep slopes, and endure scary car and coach journeys winding around roads cut into the mountain sides.

Walter Friedrich's (2009: 125) *Santorini* text covers the volcano, natural history and mythology associated with the island. He refers to Santorini as "the bronze age Pompeii", the reason being that it is the epicentre of an eruption 3600 years ago that is thought to have destroyed the Minoan civilisation on the island and nearby Crete by not only ash but also a tsunami of classical and Biblical proportion—quite literally potentially linking Santorini to the fabled island of Atlantis described by Plato and instigating the 10 plagues of Egypt mentioned in Exodus. French volcanologist Ferdinand Fouqué uncovered ruins when visiting a quarry in the south of the island in 1867, painted rooms with ceramics in, paved streets and three-storey houses, the jaw bone and pelvis of a man. Buried in pumice, but missing the human element as though an evacuation had taken place, Akrotiri is a town buried in pumice that visitors can once again walk through, peeping into houses along the way. The burial of the city and its remarkable state of preservation have led to the association with Italy's Pompeii. Under the headline and byline "Akrotiri—Santorini's own Pompeii—Akrotiri untouched for more than 3000 years" (Anon. 2016c), holiday promoters draw explicit parallels with the more recent Pompeii:

Just like Pompeii, this Minoan city was buried with little warning beneath tons of volcanic ash with its building, city squares, shops and houses preserved in pumice for later generations. Today, holiday visitors to Santorini can walk its streets and peep into homes that have remained little disturbed since 1500 BC.

Besides the artefacts "unpumiced" throughout the site, archaeologists were able to use recovery techniques from Pompeii to reconstruct the shape of wooden beds and furniture that had rotted away by using the pumice as a mould. Unlike Pompeii, however, there were no imprints of bodies in contorted horror. Santorini's volcanic devastation lay across the waters where people had evacuated themselves to. The site and its associations with Pompeii do not translate into an immediate form of dark tourism, but neither is it an example of dark tourism at a distance. There is no evidence of death on Santorini but this is where the ripples of death and destruction emanated from. Volcano Discovery is a tourist company organising bespoke package holidays to volcano sites all around the world to provide tourists with "unforgettable memories" (Volcano Discovery 2016). Organised by volcanologists, Santorini is their "fascination volcano" full of picturesque contemporary towns, prehistoric ruins and awesome landscapes. It is the geology more than the human-interest story that is the focus of these volcano tourists (Plates 5.1 and 5.2).



Plate 5.1 Santorini sunken caldera and burnt islands from Oia (Photo Source: Author 2016)

Dark Montserrat?

Tourists visiting the island of Montserrat come by ferry or plane from neighbouring Antigua. The island is mountainous, tropical and the shape of a teardrop. It measures 16 km in length and 11 km in width, 100 km square, and has a current population of just over 5100 predominantly British Overseas Territory Citizens. The highest point on the island is Chances Peak on the Soufriere Hills in the centre of the south of the island, 915 m above sea level. The Peak is currently the summit of a dynamic volcano that has been active since 1995 with various periods of dramatic and catastrophic eruption with pyroclastic mudflow. The south of the island is currently divided into five zones with access depending upon a separate five-point hazard level scale that ranges from “Unrestricted” to “Daytime Transit” to “Controlled Access” and “Essential Access” only, depending upon the current hazard status. The north of the island, 40 per cent of the island, is relatively unaffected by the volcano and eruptions apart from ash fall. Tropical, lush, and frequently described as “verdant” to invoke a connection with Ireland (cf. Skinner 2003), Montserratians now in the north of the island have endured evacuation, resettlement and problematic aid and development difficulties ever since the volcano began erupting in 1995. In her study of environmental change on the island and its social implications for disaster recovery and sustainable development, Anja Possekkel (1999) suggests that they have come to terms with the loss of their capital, Plymouth, and the devastation of much of their island,



Plate 5.2 Historic Santorini eruption postcards (Photo Source: Author 2016)

developing a resilience to "living with the unexpected". Whereas Possekel stresses the need for vision and planning, here I attend to the role of tourism in the regeneration of not just the economy on the island but also to the re-animation of the buried city of Plymouth that was "overrun" in 1997.

A visit to Montserrat is a visit of extreme contrasts. Friendly liveliness in the north and a barren empty wasteland in the south interrupted by lorries transporting volcanic sand and the occasional volcano tour taxi or minibus. The volcano has stabilised in recent years, if that is a word that can describe a slow erupting volcano, and people have started returning to the island or migrating to it from other Caribbean islands. The population remains at half the approximate 10,000 inhabitants from pre-1995 levels. Further, tourism levels are a quarter of what they used to be at 9000 tourist visits in 2015 (DiscoverMNI Team 2016). In 2015, small cruise ships have started to call at the island, changing their itinerary from sailing past lava flows when it was erupting to stopping at Plymouth jetty for tourists to be driven past the capital to the safe zone for their visit to begin. "People are coming back – Montserrat is back alive", declared Hans Birkholz, CEO of Windstar Cruises (Sloan 2015). In the past, tourists would visit the north of the island and watch the volcano from the safe distance of the Montserrat Volcano Observatory. This bird's eye view of the volcano also used to include a tour of the seismographs by the station scientists for what one guesthouse manager refers to as her "lava-loving travelers 'volcanophiles'" (Bachelor 2014). It has been replaced by a video explaining the history of the volcano and a collection of souvenirs from the volcano such as a melted coca cola bottle in what one US tourist described as "a cabinet of curiosities" (bcdonthego 2016), not too far removed from Walpole's cabinet in his Tribune room. The authenticity of an active, real live site has been maintained. The MVO helicopter outside on a helipad that flies daily measurement and observation missions adds to the frisson of a real-life disaster taking place outside of the window, on the other side of the valley, "over there". Then, the tourists can continue the tour of the island by visiting Plymouth—"the lost city" (Bergeron 2016), "the buried city" (VisitMontserrat 2016), "a modern day Pompeii" (Bachelor 2014 for FOX News). Tourists can visit the periphery of Plymouth, viewing the city from Richmond Hill, having driven past "Danger" signs, through deserted cleared streets approaching the city.

With permits, the tourists can visit the city and walk on the pyroclastic material that is the depth of half a storey, peer through windows and figure out the use of twisted, rusted shapes. Tim Edensor (2005) writes of walks through industrial ruins, the hybrid nature of the tourist consumption, personal and different. One has to pick one's own path through these ruins.

The tourist's path has been deconstructed with weird mixtures of objects and nature fused and confused, reframed and mutated in front of them, to the side, over and under. The ruin, for Edensor (2005: 141), is "an allegory of memory", temporal rather than timeless, spectral and shocking in its fatality and physicality. It can be described as the end of the life of structures and objects. It is sobering for the walker or tourist, especially so with an ominous volcanic peak puffing away above. "Now she puffs but will she blow? Trust the Lord and pray it's no!" is a popular Montserrat souvenir slogan T-shirt. One can imagine the pyroclastic cast of a burnt body in one of these lifeless rooms, but it is a violation of personal space when tourists flout and flaunt their visits such as the crew of the *Sy Skye* who posed in people's houses for social media, drinking from leftover bars but also dressing up in clothes from people's closets. This was considered too close to home for comfort for many Montserratians, actions mocking the islanders, and behaviour devoid of "empathy" for their suffering (Pierre 2016).

Plymouth is a grey, ghostly city. In a world of colour it has turned monochrome. Ash covers everything, balanced and perched on items, crusted along surfaces. Human contact marks and imprints on it. "Take only photographs, leave only footprints" was a slogan meant for tidal sand. Here, even the ash on windows remains, and tourists write graffiti with their fingertips cleaning the glass: "I woz here" as though survival letters to the future visitor (Skinner 2017). The ghosts of inhabitants now populate the city. But is this a dark tourism experience? Dark Montserrat? There are certainly "ghosts in my head" (Skinner 2008) as I lived ten months in Plymouth before and during the start of the volcano crisis in 1995. The voices, characters, activities continue for me the ethnographer. But it is not a death site or a place of atrocity except by association for Hohenhaus (2016b). It is promoted as "mysterious" with the "volcano-buried city" (Rogers 2016), "Apocalyptic" (Bachelor 2014), "Another Paradise lost" (Newsweek Staff 1997) even. Further, it is no island of Dr Moreau, and the connection is with Columbus and not Jules Verne—who visited Santorini during the 1866–1870 eruptions before writing about Captain Nemo and his crew visiting an erupting island. No deaths occurred in Plymouth, but there was an ill-fated eruption on 25/26 June 1997 down the north-east side of the volcano, 400-degree-centigrade pyroclastic material flowing at 126 kph, destroying the island airport and catching 19 Montserratians working and visiting villages on the slopes. Further eruptions in August and in subsequent years including one on 28 July 2008 have encroached on and devastated the capital. Writing in the same Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2010a) volume, Nick Petford, John Fletcher, and Yegani Morakabati (2010) link volcano tourism with dark tourism, suggesting that it

becomes lighter over time. For them (Petford et al. 2010: 85), volcano tourism is "a mix of danger and thrill seeking, combined with scientific or educational curiosity". Ironically, tourists are more attracted to the recently erupted destinations, but those are the least acceptable in terms of visiting places of disaster. Pompeii, for them, is the most authentic site of death and suffering, and hence one of the darkest (Petford et al. 2010: 90). Plymouth, Montserrat, had similar levels of destruction but no loss of life within it, and hence is not a site of death and suffering. In their words, it is "in effect a modern-day Pompeii minus human casualties" (Petford et al. 2010: 91). One can walk the streets of Plymouth on the western side of the island without feeling "ghoulish". But, perhaps, viewing the volcano from observation posts on the other side of the mountain, from Jack Boy Hill, one can see where pyroclastic flows swallowed up W.H. Bramble Airport and created a fan of new-island growth in the waters. There is a picnic site and an observation deck with fixed binoculars from where you can see the flanks of the volcano, flames, sulphur dioxide plumes, and one can trace the flow over the villages and farm land on the eastern side of the island where 19 Montserratians were killed. It is advertised as the most user-friendly site for viewing the volcano but is only accessible along decaying old roads and best approached in a four-wheel drive vehicle. It is a calm viewing spot, enlightening for the tourist. There is no mention of the fatalities at the location or in the TripAdvisor reviews. It is too close temporally to the loss of life for it to be commercially exploited as a dark tourism destination and is, thus, only a dark tourism spot from a guest demand, rather than supply, perspective.

Writing about "Reconceptualising Dark Tourism", Biran and Poria (2012) point out that the "dark" adjective need not necessarily directly equate with death. Dark tourism can be an umbrella term. It can link to the viewing of suffering, to dark play, to *schadenfreude*, and to meditations upon mortality—often through the sublime. As such, the volcano observatory on the east side of Montserrat brings more than "devastation" and "disaster" to the tourist experience found on the western side of the island. Informally, tour guides often take tourists to the viewing deck and talk about the accidents that occurred at the airport during its existence; they narrate the rescue operations that took place in 1997 when pyroclastic flows threatened and ultimately claimed the site and 19 lives. This can take place before tourists fly off the island from the new runway built in the centre of the island that can only accommodate small planes. It becomes a nerve-wracking, personalised experience, more than a "surreal" and "a humbling reminder of nature's awesome power" as tourism to Montserrat is positioned by VisitMontserrat (2016) (Plates 5.3 and 5.4).



Plate 5.3 Plymouth outskirts under the volcano (Photo Source: Author 2005)



Plate 5.4 Tour guide narrating from Jack Boy Hill (Photo Source: Author 2015)

Dark Tourism: New for Old

The twentieth century is the century when access to leisure expanded from the leisure class to the wider society (Seabrook 1995). It is also the time period when anthropology as a discipline as well as other social sciences developed. Late twentieth century is when we see the convergence of tourism and anthropology in the preceding sections of this chapter as well as a developing engagement with the subject of dark tourism as an offshoot of thanatourism. This, then, would appear to be the era of escape, according to sociologist Chris Rojek (1993: 136) who ties in "fatal attractions" to our new postmodern landscape. It is jaded by "black spots": "commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large numbers of people have met with sudden and violent death" (Rojek 1993: 136). According to Rojek, these locations—from Auschwitz to Graceland and the Killing Fields of Cambodia—are predicated on a new mass production of commodities and a desire for the spectacular rather than the meaningful. They encourage a projection into the personalities and ways of life portrayed (Rojek 1993: 144). This is described as a "nostalgia in modernity" (Rojek 1993: 145), a reaction to our contemporary living. "Under postmodernity, it might be said, everyone is a permanent *émigré* from the present", Rojek (1993: 168) professes. Yet even Rojek accepts that fin de siècle America filled Luna Park in Coney Island with simulations of the Fall of Pompeii and the eruption of Vesuvius, as well as the Pennsylvania Johnstown flood of 1889 and the 1902 eruption of Mount Pelée in Martinique that killed over 30,000 residents—the worst volcanic disaster of the twentieth century. In another part of the United States, Arlington Park, Denver's third amusement park, opened in 1892. A purpose-built leisure centre for amusement and escapism, it featured tennis courts, baseball field and theatre. It was built by dredging a creek and creating a lake with island. The main attraction at the park was "The Last days of Pompeii" show set up across the lakeside writ across a 52-foot canvas. Lights simulated the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Park historian David Forsyth (2016: 17) explains how this attraction worked:

Openings in the stage allowed smoke and flames to shoot up through the set, each series of events controlled electronically. To create the illusion of lava flowing down the sides of Vesuvius, a red light was set up behind the canvas; holes cut through the material allowed it to shine through, while a man moved the light around behind the screen to control the lava flow.

It did not last long, however. The park was remodelled five years later with the Pompeii key attraction giving way to a diving elk show and a scenic railway

ride around the park. In 1901, tramps or arsonists burnt the park down permanently (Forsyth 2016: 18). Whereas traces of such Pompeiis are less visible in contemporary leisure sites, the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami might be imaginatively reflected in the contemporary Valley of the Waves theme park in South Africa's Sun City where waves crash through the swimming pool and earthquakes perform to an hourly timescale for the intrepid explorer tourist.

Pompeii figures in the imagination of the leisure tourist and amusement park visitor, perhaps the latter as a pre-tourist. Rojek is wrong to associate the fatal attractions with late-modernity/postmodernity. As shown above, fatal attractions have captured the imagination of the public whether or not they were in a position to realise their interests. Since the Roman Empire, leisure and hedonism were associated with military triumph and gladiator fights were organised following a military tragedy or natural disaster (Korstanje 2008: 17). In a similar argument to Rojek, but about a very different historical period, French studies academic Goran Blix (2013) suggests that changes to the *Ancien Régime*, the consequences of the French Revolution and the industrialisation of society resulted in a gap between the past and the present/future. People harped back for the golden age when there was less social and economic turbulence. This nostalgia manifested in an anxiety and nostalgia chronicled by Blix (2013) in his study *From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology*. For Blix (2013: 1), “[t]he mortality of cultures was a key experience of modernity”. These were Apocalyptic, indeterminate times. Writing about them “embalmed” the ephemeral for Balzac, whilst Schopin and Bruillov painted out their fears and fascinations with their own respective *Last Days of Pompeii*—the latter of which was viewed by Bulwer-Lytton before he wrote his own catastrophic version. In so doing, the Romantics projected themselves and their present-day fears into a past they visited literally and existentially.

The discovery of Pompeii exemplified for them the most radical alterity, a Lost City allowing access to a Lost World of Antiquity. Blix (2013: 160) explains: “Egypt and Pompeii were less models or lessons, less sites of mourning or ornament, than nostalgic surrogate homes, imaginary homelands that poets exiled in modernity yearned to visit”. Blix interprets the Romantic fascination with Pompeii, the idle tourism there, the pilgrimages, the souvenirs, the artworks—to which we can add the subsequent, postmodern, multi-media representations—as a playful identification with the Other. There is pain in this. Not just because of the emptiness of time and the disconnect with one's place, but also the loss of lives, the geological extinction of civilisation that can still only be glimpsed askance. This is one revolution after

another, the social after the sublime to juxtapose the geological tremors and eruptions with the upheavals in the social and feudal hierarchy. These are transitions and accelerations that have been with us across the *longue durée*. They are not just fin de -20th-siècle.

Emma Willis (2014) alludes to the issue of tourism and alterity in her recent work on dark tourism and theatricality. The dead are the Other by their haunting absence. We memorialise them and try to develop or maintain a relationship to close the void. This takes place in a theatrical "aesthetically mediated aftermath" (Willis 2014: 36) to the initial event. Whether crawling through the Cu Chi tunnels dressed up as Viet Cong soldiers, boating past a Pompeii son et lumière, or signing graffiti at the "Pompeii of the West" (Anon. 2016d) on the island of Montserrat, we engage with re-animations of the past, often "playing" the boundaries of presence and absence, the real and the reproduced. We are both spectators and witnesses. And, as such, we are complicit, implicated in the victimisation reproduced. For Willis, there is no neutrality in viewing. There are no spectatorial sidelines or theatrical wings in genocide memorial, catastrophe curiosity visiting, disaster gawping. There is, though, a sense of co-presence—of being with the Other of the past—and there is a co-subject construction as this visiting impacts upon the identity of the viewer and leads to an identification with the viewed. This is implication, interpellation and witnessing with Pompeii—whether ruin or excavation, literary re-animation, sublime geological education or spectacular leisure entertainment.

Notes

1. Tourism equates to one of Giddens's (1991: 112) "fateful moments" and in the context of this chapter approximates Rojek's "fatal attractions" (1993: 136). These visitor experiences are built around contrast. In terms of emotions and arousal, Gillen points out that "tourism can and does provide the opportunity to experience a contrasting emotional landscape, where the familiar self can be felt in an unfamiliar way" (2001, author's emphasis). For him, these emotions can be bought and sold as commodities open for circulation. In terms of the dark tourism literature, the discussion in this section of the volume is whether or not this commoditisation is a new phenomenon and whether the label dark tourism is sanguine and appropriate to describe what is taking place. Space does not allow engagement with distinctions between "natural" as opposed to the man-made "cultural" disasters (cf. Lowenthal 2005) or the thesis of the disaster as "man-made" constructions arising from 'modernising pressures' (cf. Torry 1979: 518; Skinner 2000).

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