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'Was here': Identity traces and digital footprints as survival writing

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This article looks at the traces of identity writ-large by fingertip, using volcanic ash on a ruined patio window frame in an evacuated eruption zone on the island of Montserrat, and goes on to trace the digital footprints of the 'writer/s' after the discovery of their markings two years later. This is a virtual travel journey of places visited, tagged, in-

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scribed and re-inscribed. The suggestion is that the motivation for an out-of-sight site under the gaze of an active volcano is a form of survivalist script. "Jen & Marc Hart, San Fran¹, 02-14-2015 ♥" reads the survivalists' Valentine. This personal but public inscription is located in a natural disaster space but is also anticipating connections in time, writing to the future reader here.



I'm a survivor, a writer
 Three days after
 (opening lines of 'The Hugo Effect' by Kimberley Fenton 1989: 43)

I admit that I derived some poor consolation in my mortal lot from the belief
 that the whole world was dying with me and I with it
 (Pliny's Second Letter to Tacitus, 6.20)

"Jen & Marc Hart, San Fran, 02-14-2013 ♥ (ash graffiti, Plymouth, Montserrat 2015)"

Writing is the original hypertext. In conjunction with reading, writing makes the subject present, here and now for the reader despite the writer's obvious absence. French postmodern philosopher Lyotard (1991, 49) auralises this process as a calling 'forth of presence', of making the subject stand the test/text of time: the writer is here without being here. There is presence in their absence. This feat or fantasy of communication creates an assumed connection between the reader and the writer. Both are aware and familiar with this magic act/art: the writer escapes the boundaries of their living by entextualising their life for the reader who also escapes and expands their own in reading the writer. There is

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¹ Names have been changed.

no constancy about this process. It is indeterminate according to Iser's (1988) reader response theory, and yet we are still impassioned to write and to read and to zig and zag between the social realities we construct in both activities (cf. Rapport 1994). This 'texting of life' (Skinner 2002), this Ozymandias impulse, takes place during ordinary and extra-ordinary times. Taking the extra-ordinary, for Sontag (1967) a disaster can turn into a writing opportunity, giving an edge to the words and a poignancy to the process. Writing in particular can become a compulsion, even, as a way of writing oneself elsewhere, out of an unfolding crisis (Skinner 2000). The writing can also memorialise or repeat the disaster. It is a second coming. 'The disaster ... is the limit of writing' according to Maurice Blanchot (1995, 7). It pushes us to write better. But beware. '[T]he disaster describes', he adds (1995, 7). It is a possible feat, though the event also effaces and eclipses (its) writing.

Writing from experiences of France during World War Two, Blanchot's disaster was one of occupation. More literal are disasters manmade such as the immersion in death from the bombing of Hiroshima and subsequent sustained death encounter that has had an indelible impact, a 'death impact' chronicled by Lifton (2003, 30 author's emphases) with its psychological and sociological features:

Summarizing the psychological significance of this early phase, I would stress the *indelible imprint of death immersion, which forms the basis of what we shall later see to be a permanent encounter with death*; the fear of annihilation of self and of individual identity, along with *the sense of having virtually experienced that annihilation*; destruction of the non-human environment, of the field or context of one's existence, and therefore of one's overall sense of "being-in-the-world"; and the *replacement of the natural order of living and dying with an unnatural order of death-dominated life*.

The shock of living with this history is also apparent in the aphoristically-labelled Holocaust from World War Two. It overwhelms with its magnitude. It detracts from our humanity with its banalness. It negates our cultural capacities with its complicities. In such manmade disasters the 'existential imperative' (Jackson 2005, xxii) to own the world and live the life of our choosing comes under threat. 'The Holocaust for some remains a vacuum that consumes all light intended to illuminate it', reinforce dark tourism scholars John Lennon and Malcolm Foley (2004: 152). And yet, for others, suffering can give on to transcendence—and pain can be displaced by art—as the struggle to survive and endeavour to be in the world—to defy its finitude—is a gauntlet taken up. Nigel Rapport (2003) traces this capacity to make ones circumstance in, for example, the life project of Stanley Spencer's art that took him through war and relationship breakdown. Some exhibit a resilient *Machtgefühl* (feeling of power, a manifest self-intensity [Rapport 2003b, 4, 13, 23]). These imperatives breach the solipsism of our existence, what Fernandez (1986) labels the inchoate of the Other

that is both present and absent to us. Fleeting, this is courted—and our incommensurability contested—through literary, figurative and expressive practices as being humans we find ways to narrate ourselves and we in-scribe.

A disaster represents change, instability with existential and ontological implications. Under such disorientation, some capitalise and press for new change: Phaedra Pezzullo (2010) explores the disaster tours of New Orleans as political lobbying tactic following in the wake of hurricane Katrina; Naomi Klein (2008) articulates a 'disaster capitalism' of free market economics post-disaster—an a/effluent 'hyperbolic capitalism' closely described by Edward Simpson (2013) in his study of the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake. There, in the amnesia that came out of the incoherence of the event in India, the natural disaster—magnified by man—lurks to reacquaint itself and run amok again. The daze of the disaster never really defuses. The 'sadism of catastrophe' (Simpson 2013, 14) is what lies in wait. They haunt as 'catastrophic phantoms' (Gray and Oliver 2004, 2) memorialised in memory texts laid down. Linguist and Holocaust scholar Andrea Reiter (2004, 135) points out that from a Freudian perspective trauma lies at the aching heart of literature: 'literary texts are forms of sublimated trauma', she explains. As such, these memories of disaster are far from being repressed. They are motile and can morph and can be harnessed for nationalist causes such as the Irish famine for Republicanism, or Dos Bocas well fire of 1908 subsequently subsumed in a discourse of Mexican modernity and nationality (cf. Kuecker 2004). 'Ownership' of a disaster and control over its understanding, interpretation and appreciation is complex, fraught and frequently disputed (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002, 11). The contributors to Susanna Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith's (2002) edited volume *Catastrophe e³ Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster* unravel these travails in ethnographic detail—of note, the labelling metonyms (Katrina, Chernobyl, 9/11) that stand for, surround, and try to circum-scribe the wider encompassment of the disaster.

Similarly, events are 'contained and controlled' through their production and objectification—kitsch objects for consumption such as Twin Tower and Oklahoma City snowglobes (Sturken 2007, 2). Even national traumas can be commoditised. Sturken (2007, 226) continues with her analysis of the aesthetics of absence in the memorialisation of the twin towers, a tribute of light offsetting the wound in the skyline salving the city's phantom limb symptoms (Taylor 2003, 247). When our order of things is transgressed or challenged, and uncertainty befalls us, we bound it and name it, familiarise ourselves with it, historicise and give shape to it and thereby bring it within our dominion. Even the outliers to our common experience are remarshalled as 'freaks of nature', Hoffman (2002, 127) points out; or monsters, devils and ghouls—"Vesuvius is a monster not to be restrained by any man's cunning or ingenuity", she quotes from volcanologist Alessandro Malladra in 1913 (Hoffman 2002, 127); its crater 'the great circus ring' for Mark Twain (1869). Such volcanoes attract us with their 'telluric agen-

cy' for Heringman (2003, 97), a potent sublime aesthetic quality that attracts, confuses and warns us all at the same time. Such is the style of the natural catastrophe fondly written about by Enlightenment scholars: '[t]he alien agency of earthquakes and eruptions leads these writers to register nature's otherness, an otherness that not only refuses domestication but also problematizes representation itself' (Heringman 2003, 97). The magnitude, dangers and exhilarations of the volcano defy linguistic and cognitive framing. They have to be seen, felt and heard to be appreciated, as the old adage goes. And, in their presence one has the 'great drama of nature' played out—the eruption akin, for Heringman (2003, 121), to the human tragedy in the sense that it is beyond our control; the volcanoes' crater 'a cavity of language' (Heringman 2003, 104). The event is above us, visceral, pungent; an event that could shake us to OUR (molten) core; unpredictable and more terrible than terrorising; more real and present danger than the non-events glossing past us on Baudrillard's (2007) television sets. It smokes and sells itself.

These descriptions and positionings are all so very external and distant. They miss the immersive and disabling qualities of the disaster (cf. Carrigan 2010). Rather like a reel promotion, 'ISU Geosciences group recounts trip to the volcanic Caribbean Island Montserrat, featuring the "Pompeii of the West"' runs the Idaho State University tagline for a review of their educational stay on the island (ISU 2016). Their students visited this Eastern Caribbean island where a volcano has been erupting since 1995 but has now been audited and delimited by the Montserrat Volcano Observatory platform of scientists monitoring the eruption from a building with a view and viewing gallery. This is one of the top tourist attractions on the island. It provides a lens into the sublime powers of the volcano and its grey aesthetic. The north of the island is considered to be relatively safe. The former capital Plymouth in the south west has been overtaken by the volcano and is a limited access environment. And the far south is a no go area. Once known by the epithet 'The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean' (Fergus 1992) for its lush verdant tropical undergrowth and its tenuous connections with Ireland via a history of indentured labourers, now Montserrat is marketed as a contrast between 'the green and the gritty' (MTB 2015; Skinner 2015). It is perhaps one of the naturally dark sites of travel (cf. Skinner 2012), a location where many chronicle their life on the island or visiting the island, both a form of survival writing (Skinner 2011).

'Was here'—A travel story of sorts

Rather than outline the various forms of writings of Montserrat—the poems, short stories, sketches, essays—I am interested in some 'graffiti' on a patio window that I saw during my last visit to the island in February 2015. It was a glimpse caught by my camera in the limited visit zone on the outskirts of the

former capital Plymouth. It was an eerie afternoon, quiet, lifeless as my partner and I drove along long-deserted roads to reclaim my memories of a bustling part of town where I worked as a fledgling anthropologist inquiring into representations of place, sometimes helping in the local radio station to sort tapes for the calypsonians, occasionally meeting tourists in the Montserrat National Trust's Museum—a converted windmill atop Richmond Hill. The houses are all empty now—deserted since mandatory evacuation first in 1995 and then finally in 1997—and with piles of ash silted up on patios, through exposed doorways and throughout stripped out houses. Tour guides take tourists through the old roads, now Unrestricted Access areas but formerly Controlled Access zones or Day-time Access zones. The outskirts of Plymouth is where Zone V begins, a Restricted Access zone marked with signs and unmanned road blocks. Leading up to this area, vacant properties lie exposed to the elements: acid rain, burning ash, pyroclastic mud flows. There are footprints through the ash into derelict condominiums, many of which have been boarded up, some left open, a few under repair, some opened up for salvage or looting. Tourist photos abound across the internet of derelict domestic debris—scattered personal items, documents, clothes, shoes, golf clubs.

There is something authentic about all of this. It draws in and draws upon the imagination to reconfigure the lifestyles of the rich and famous. Looking through the condo window is glimpsing into the past, a real living history and tragedy. Tourists like to visit and film the ruined Montserrat Springs Hotel (Seitz 2007), to kick through the ash as though it were the sand from the beach—but it really is getting everywhere, leaving prints through the foyer where ferns now grow around the front desk, waves of ash rippling along the first floor walkway, and inches of ash piled through the abandoned rooms leaving a patterning of intruders' bootprints (see also Skinner 2015b). Writing about post-industrial Britain, Tim Edensor (2005) suggests that the pleasure in the ruin is its disarming confrontation with danger and death, in its allegorical relationship with memory as something that was and needs to be reconfigured by the imagination, and as something contrasting with the everyday, the orderly, the controlled. Like the vacation itself, the ruin's allure is as a 'space of defamiliarisation' (Edensor 2005, 25). Objects appear hybrid, weird fused mixtures, uncategorised. Tourist engagements with space constitute 'improvisational path-making' (Edensor 2005, 87). One way of inhabiting these imagined local worlds is by using fantasy as the medium of engagement—'fantasy as practice'—according to Brad Weiss (2002, 97) in his study of fashion and hair *couture* in Arusha, Tanzania. This imaginative approach to social life is found amongst the new Pompeii tourists, 'anti-tourists' (Edensor 2005, 95) even, as they explore the landscape with care, using their senses and constructing their own tourist gaze for all the footprints ahead of them. They rebuild and repopulate the environment as they make sense of it. Either that or they enact a modern version of the

historical Grand Tour to the Pompeii of the old world, aristocratic voyeurs through a new digital lens.

The Independent foreign correspondent Phil Davison (1997, 12) likens Plymouth to 'echoes of Pompeii', reworlding the destination much like the former epithet positions Montserrat as the carbon copy of the original Emerald Isle ('The Other Emerald Isle' [Nigro 1988, Monaghan 1993, Messenger 1994], 'The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean' [Fergus 1992], 'Emerald Isle of the West' [Geovan 1986]). This is another form of repetition to the 'unfolding and bifurcating' in the meta-archipelago of the Caribbean critiqued by Cuban writer Antonio Bénitez-Rojo (1992). Here it is ash rather than spume connecting the island to others (Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Vincent, St Lucia). Tourists accompanying tour guides with permission to explore the former capital reacted strongly to their experience. SBTampaBay (2015) reviewed their experience to the 'island of fire' on TripAdvisor, reflecting on their post-volcano return to the island whilst promoting the tour they went on:

We were stunned. There is no other word to describe what we saw and felt. The vibrant city we remembered was either burned to the ground and/or covered in ash. The few remaining buildings were in ash, mostly roof high. The buildings that we were allowed to enter were so eerie and so sad. This is where time stands still; personal belongings left behind, furniture, everything just as it was but covered in ash and ruins. Buildings had to be abandoned along with lives, hopes, dreams. [...] I kept thinking about the Jimmy Buffet *Volcano* song and how much money has been made from that favorite. Wouldn't it be nice if someone who knows Jimmy, who reads this, puts a bug in his ear to do something wonderful for Montserrat. These lovely people could certainly use the help!

Whilst it is unlikely that Jimmy Buffet reads TripAdvisor reviews of tourism to Montserrat, the 1979 hit song was rerecorded with contemporary references to Montserrat and Buffet played it during the 1997 Music for Montserrat appeal concert in the Royal Albert Hall. Buffet appeared alongside other artists who had recorded at Montserrat's AIR Studios: Phil Collins, Mark Knopfler, Sting, Elton John, Eric Clapton, Paul McCartney, Midge Ure. SBTampaBay describes herself on TripAdvisor as a 65+ year old female traveller from Clearwater, Florida; a 'peace and quiet seeker', 'beach goer' and 'luxury traveller'. They have over 50 reviews, good and bad on their site for which they receive points and the status of Top Contributor (over 5,400 TripCollective points); ratings as to the helpfulness of their reviews from other readers (they have a Readership badge, having achieved over 25,000 readings); and levels awarded for uploading photographs, hotel and restaurant reviews. With the rewards for involvement, it is almost like an online game. It can certainly be a summary of their travels with their Membership Profile from air miles (16,926) to tagging the locations in the world they have visited (3% travelled) and presenting a grid view of their con-

tributions and their locations (visited and listed as places to visit). The contributor can also be Messaged directly. The points are of no monetary value and cannot be redeemed for anything.

A less prolific TripAdvisor poster, Jeanne V. from Indianapolis, Indiana, also visited Montserrat and took a tour with the same tour guide, posting her review — “Perfect Guide, Beautiful Island, Heartbreaking History” — a week before SBTampaBay’s review. Jeanne V. visited on a day trip stop as part of the return of Windstar Cruises to the island in 2015 and spent seven hours with the tour guide. For her, the visit to Plymouth was a walk back in time that was simultaneously disturbing and fascinating. She recorded the visit taking personal photographs for her posterity.

Imagine a modern appearing city seemingly frozen in time—to the point of books on counters, shopping carts in stores—and then buried in ash. We walked around peering down into buildings buried to the tops of third floor windows. The desolation and silence were unsettling. I took probably a hundred pictures. XXX asked us at one point if we’d like him to take a picture of us, to “prove that we were there”. I told him that while I took pictures of the landscape to document the history, I didn’t feel like taking a selfie would be appropriate. There was too much tragedy evident here. He was quiet for a moment, then simply said, “Thank you.” I was again reminded that this moon-landscape had once been his home. I wanted to cry.

What I loved so very much about this day was the chance to spend it with a local like XXX. We didn’t so much HEAR the story of Montserrat as relive it, and feel it, with him.

Jeanne is profoundly moved by the experience before she returns to her ship. She connects emotionally with her tour guide, one of Wynn’s (2011, 6) ‘ground troops of the travel industry’ with their lowtech blended narrations that re-enchant place. Jeanne is a tourist gaining local insights into life on Montserrat from especially before and during the volcano disaster. She feels like she is re-living the events through the tour guide’s drama. This is similar to the tourist walking the Falls Road and re-living the tour guide’s ‘blanket protests’ (Skinner 2016). Touring Sarajevo and Mostar, Senija Causevic and Paul Lynch’s (2011, 792) examination of tourism in post-conflict settings - phoenix tourism – showed, further, that both guides and tourists go through a personal catharsis as a by-product of the interaction with each other for all the commodification and persona construction at play in the tourist/guide interactions (cf. Bunten 2008). It is interesting the expectation XXX has that the tourist wants a selfie as proof of their experience, and testimony to the involving nature of the engagement that it is declined. Jeanne seems to be aware of the potential for the camera to over-mediate, to over-medicate to anaesthetise the experience. Taking snaps of images of victims in the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide in Cambodia aligns the visitor with the mass perpetrator, ‘reduplicating’ the violence according to Emma Willis

(2014, 158) in her analysis of theatricality, dark tourism and ethical spectatorship. Jeanne appears to feel guilt at the camera-mediated distance that her viewfinder lends her, hence passing up the opportunity of a selfie. She re-animates the experience not with photos but with a 974 word-long review of her day with the tour guide. The re-animation of Plymouth, twice missing in a Barthesian fashion, takes place in her private album.

Visiting the outskirts of Plymouth where I had worked briefly in the local national museum in 1994/5, I photographed some of the outsides of the condominiums. Zooming in on one patio door, there was a series of graffiti, people marking their visit by writing and drawing with their fingers in the ash: a World War Two era Kilroy or Chad face with large nose peeping over a wall; some 'was here's', and a more explicit 'Jen & Marc Hart, San Fran, 2-14-2013 ♥'. This was an American Valentine's Day message that was unexpectedly standing the test of time. Written by the absence of ash, marking the presence and absence of the writer, the inscription could be clearly read over two years later during my visit to examine St Patrick's Day on Montserrat, 17th March 2015. Who were Jen and Marc from San Francisco? What had they seen and done on the island and what were they doing subsequently? I knew that they had survived their visit. Was this an example of survival writing, a message to the future of their now-past love? Was this a threat-survival reaction, talismanic, like the Jewish mission tourists' photos of old Krakow (Lehrer 2013, 67), more a wave to the future than message in a bottle?

There are not many visitors to Montserrat each year and there are few places for them to stay. It is possible to further investigate this glimpse of temporary graffiti in an abandoned suburb of the new Pompeii. People leave digital footprints on the internet, especially rogue adventure travellers romantically visiting this natural disaster destination and making their relationship visible to each other and to the other reading public if they ever anticipated one. In terms of ethics, this 'netnography' (Kozinets 2010) research has involved changing names and several important identity markers, working solely with webpages in public domains, and finally with the approval of 'Jen and Marc'. The Harts work in IT near Silicon Valley, San Francisco, and have public pages with LinkedIn, Facebook, and their own Blog spaces. They are comfortable with their digital presence. It accounts for their work and leisure activities. Jen has TripAdvisor pages and reviews her meals out, her stays, and posts photos to support her presence. She moved to San Francisco from Seattle and leads an outdoors lifestyle with Marc who has a French background, both travelling long haul to exotic destinations every few months, particularly through South America and Australasia. Theirs is an able-bodied 'narrative on the net' (Skinner 2002), contrasting with that of other visitors to Montserrat who maintained an active online presence as their physical status declined. In examining the Hart's online footprints, I am not suggesting that online accounts are not always subject to careful self-

presentation, distortion or falsification. Their socially mediated account of their visit using Web 2.0 user-generated platforms does, however, have 'credibility' and 'coherence' to it (Cheung 2000) as it presents a consistent narrative of self without inconsistencies to trouble the reader/viewer. It has 'constancy' (Slater 1998, 115) and 'credibility' (Hammersley 1990, 73) gained from the stability of self presented. In sum, it is 'believable' (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) and 'persuasive' (Strathern, 1987).

To phrase it anthropologically, Jen and Marc use social media to express and extend the self (cf. Miller 2011, 179; Turkle 1984). They write to themselves, to each other, and to their family and friends. They are encouraged by replies, 'likes', and the reactions of others. Marc, more so than Jen, 'Facebooks' the vacation: the small plane and flight from Antigua to Montserrat, Jen at the hotel, the ruins of Plymouth, the gates to the abandoned famous AIR Studios recording studio on the island. There is no image of their St Valentine's Day graffiti. That is not a public image if there indeed is one. The images are posted on different days than when the tourists are on Montserrat. They constitute a photo album for the tourists and their friends and family of the places visited and experienced along with several mementos, souvenirs from their visit such as 'the last piece of stationery' from the Studio—a gift to a musician friend. This is memory-making online, a 'socially mediatized' tourist gaze after Shakeela and Weaver (2016) that persists.

Writing about the 'commemorabilia' (commodities for commemoration) surrounding the 9/11 World Trade Centre, Joy Sather-Wagstaff (2011, 44) applies the work of Landsberg to the furious number of photographs in circulation:

Landsberg (2004, 2) introduces the provocative, powerful, and very useful notion of "prosthetic memory", a form of memory that "emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum" or, I add, a commemorative landscape or when viewing travel photographs.

This activity fashions new memories and, with its open public face, different levels of interpretation ranging from friends to family to colleagues, tourists and tour guides. The Pompeii of the West is becoming a commemorative landscape, one very much reliant upon digital technology and the internet. These people are curious to see history, to become part of it by seeing and experiencing it rather than have it mediated through the news (Sather-Wagstaff 2011, 75). On Montserrat, the bonus is that it is live and on-going.

9/11 photos and objects are highly evocative, Sather-Wagstaff (2011, 181) found. They encourage the viewer to put themselves in the place of the person in the photograph. On Montserrat, this becomes the person *in absentia*: the hotel receptionist on the phone has gone; the residential tourist putting away his golf clubs before watching some cable television has gone from the picture; the record producer listening to the band cutting their album has gone. But we can im-

agine ourselves there in their place. In the last case, the recording studios had closed in 1989 following the previous natural disaster on Montserrat, Hurricane Hugo. Nearly a quarter of a century later and AIR Studios is coming back to life in the tourists' imagination subsumed as a part of the wider eruption on the island. The display of the photographs by the tourists are a re-performance of their initial visits. They perform a subjectivity whether SBTampaBay, Jeanne V., Jen and Marc. Sather-Wagstaff (2011, 173) elaborates that the tourists often see themselves as personal historians archiving, crafting, and disseminating displays of their special experiences that they can then revisit and go back to as and when they wish. They are the new social media class, those on Montserrat emulating the leisured class on the classical European Grand Tour, travelling in style, living their leisure status that affords them a vacation, and all the while accumulating a collection of *souvenirs*—literally remembrances. I, myself, even have a cigarette packet full of ash from the start of the volcano disaster that I left in 1995, and a bottle of ash from the visit in 2015.

Finger Tips and Graffiti Trips

In his extended essay *I Swear I Saw This*, the anthropologist Michael Taussig (2011) meditates upon a glimpse of poverty that he subsequently sketched. Taussig takes the sad short sight of a poor man in an underpass being sown into a nylon bag for shelter to new depths. This image acts as a haunting refrain throughout his book as Taussig mines it to examine the relationship between seeing and believing and the medium of the text and/or image as record of proof. The sketch in the notebook accompanies the written word as a suggestive adjunct, adding a metaphysical dimension to the clinical absolutism of the text. If writing is 'an erasing machine' (18) because of its ability to obliterate reality, drawing is a making of reality, expansive to the reductive writing. There is a balance, then, between Marc and Jen's written names and Hart surname along with the heart sign—the latter a symbol for love that also acts as a verbal homonym for their surname. Moreover, "drawing" from John Berger, Taussig "notes" that the photograph takes from reality, freezing time, whereas the drawing makes a reality, encompassing time, one's everyday in the transient. The drawing is more of an autobiographical record steeped in a more romantic graphite. It links the image-maker to moments of observation as though weaving a sympathetic magic. This explains the fetish of the fieldnotes held by the anthropologist: the notebook is 'the guardian of experience ... highly specialized organ of consciousness ... an outrigger of the soul' (25). And so the drawings therein add to 'the thing-become-spirit' (31) that plays centre stage in Taussig's book, though we treat drawing as secondary to writing in our skewed—sketchy?—hierarchy of representations: the evocative rather than the representative is ostensibly unstable, flexible, more imaginative and dangerous; it is cosmopolitan

in its malleability. It also “draws attention” to the philosophical gap between words and things—scar tissue for Ernest Gellner’s burns, collage paper for William Burroughs and Brion Gysin’s experimental publications.

What then of Marc—for it was Marc—writing and drawing with his finger-as-pen on the glass window, a digitally shaped communique subsequently rendered digital? This is one of Taussig’s (2011, 101) ‘text-image interchanges’ that I am bearing witness to. This puts me alongside Jen. Sather-Wagstaff (2011, 119-129) observed graffiti at Ground Zero and refers to it as examples of dialogic practice speaking anonymously to people who are not co-present. The place where the graffiti is made is significant, and the graffiti as practice ‘speaks’ as a folk epigraphy. It is an ‘image act’ (Sather-Wagstaff 2011, 121) that is understood to be ephemeral. It is seen as temporary around the World Trade Centre site and, as in the case of many commemorative sites, is typically sandblasted or painted over. One strategy has been to guide the graffiti to officially sanctioned surfaces from painted canvases to memorial boards to avoid the defacement of the site (Sather-Wagstaff 2011, 127). Marc’s gesture to Jen remained through the two years of visits to the outskirts of Plymouth till my viewing. Unlike the lithic liveness of the Paleolithic handprints in the prehistoric caves of France viewed and commented upon by performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider (2014), this is an “I Love You—I Swear I Do” in Taussig fashion. It is made for witnessing by immediate and potential viewer/reader/bystander. Whereas the negative Paleolithic handprints of the Dordogne hail across time as a call and response inaugurating a relation (Schneider 2014), Marc’s fingertip writing and drawing is a romantic gesture, an expression of his inner state to Jen and to any viewing public. That it is created under a live volcano by visitors soon to leave the island adds to the survival element to its crafting. Their love is enduring and seismic. It becomes a part of the attraction of the place for tourists.

Marc and Jen visited a number of houses on the outskirts of Plymouth. They also took a trip to AIR Studios, visiting a place where many of the sounds of their youth came from and also marking their visit in the glass and with a souvenir letterhead. Cherry, Ryzewski and Pecoraro (2013), archaeologists of AIR Studios, point out the contemporary silence of this iconic cultural heritage centre where so many sounds of the 80s were formulated. They surveyed the site in 2010 and were shocked by the jarring of the musical memories in their minds with the natural disaster realities of the place.

The contrast between the vibrant video recordings of musicians previously working and playing in these spaces and the current state of silence and utter dereliction was shocking - the door to the recording studio hanging off its hinges and engulfed in tropical overgrowth, many rooms partially flooded, roofs and floors sagging and rotting, the pool full of sludge, and volcanic ash blowing everywhere. (Cherry, Ryzewski and Pecoraro 2013, 186)

They documented the material culture of the site that they found scattered about: reel-to-reels, booking forms, technical manuals, computer disks, an empty guitar case. People 'curate' (Cherry, Ryzewski and Pecoraro 2013, 191) these objects that they acquire from their pilgrimages to this shell of a music centre. They leave traces of their visits in footprints, moving foliage and structures in their path, and joining with the heritage of the place with their graffiti. This makes it 'a transitional place' (Cherry, Ryzewski and Pecoraro 2013, 194) in flux, an archaeological site ever becoming. 'Drink at the bar of the stars' reads the publicity behind the repurposed AIR Studios bar at the Soca Cabana bar at Little Bay, Montserrat. Three years later, Marc and Jen found a place in more disrepair as music pilgrims to AIR Studios. Their fingertip graffiti here is very different to the handprints of the stars and their concrete graffiti that were uncovered by the archaeologists (Cherry, Ryzewski and Pecoraro 2013, 188). These are records of the past and solid messages to the future by bands such as America, and the Climax Blues Band. It is stylised, recognised, official, public and as the first recording artists at the Studios they would have had a ritual surrounding the event like the imprinting ceremonies of the stars at Hollywood's TCL Chinese Theatre. Marc's unaccounted St Valentine glass missive is more private and furtive, notionally illegal even, and less permanent – if anything can be considered to be permanent in this part of the island. It is an emotional response to the day, to his travelling companion, to the natural disaster around and above him.

In a review of tourism to volcanic and geothermal destinations, Patricia Erfurt-Cooper (2011, 189) notes that tourists are attracted to 'the doom' of the cataclysmic volcanic event. One might consider them dark tourism destinations that we use to face up to our impending mortality. Here simmers the sublime in the volcano. The AD79 eruption covering Pompeii and Herculaneum in Old World Italy is the archetype eruption that is often recreated in film and print media. It is no coincidence that Marc and Jen went on to visit this Pompeii of the East the following year. The Ur volcano destination. Whilst there was probably no ephemeral graffiti there from Marc and Jen, they did visit around St Valentine's Day again and would have seen extensive Roman graffiti uncovered as well as the cast of the lovers locked in eternal embrace made from the 'negative' of their deaths. They survived their visit to Montserrat just as their graffiti survived its construction. In a subsequent interview they clarified their actions: "We were exploring and wanted to leave a date/footprint/mark behind. Something that wasn't destructive and said 'we've been here'!"

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