

Interactive comment on “In my remembered country: what poetry tells us about the changing perceptions of volcanoes” by Arianna Soldati and Sam Illingworth

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Anonymous Referee #3

General comments 1. The title does not reflect well the study: it is too general for the collection of poems considered. As the authors indicate, they had to impose several constraints (time period, language, paper length, preferred writing-style, etc), resulting in a collection of only 34 poems, which is a very limited pool of poems for such an ambitious title. In addition to the importance of the language/culture restriction, limitation underlined in the conclusion of the manuscript, the time period considered (1800 - present), selected because it coincides with the emergence and development of vol-

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canalogy, might also have a strong impact on the final results. In Europe/US (where the majority of the artists come from), this period coincides with many scientific discoveries and social changes (related to the industrialisation) compared with previous centuries, which modified in particular spiritual/religious believes and human-Nature relationship, two themes which are considered in this study. Hence, the results regarding the temporal evolution of the various categories, would have likely been different if the time period considered would have included centuries prior to the 19th. For these reasons, the title should be more specific (or the pool of poems studied extended).

We have expanded the title to read: “In my remembered country: what poetry tells us about the changing perceptions of volcanoes between the XIX and XXI centuries”. This will help the potential reader quickly gauge their interest in the study. Further details can be found in the abstract.

2. The manuscript (particularly introduction and methodology) would benefit from various clarifications: – what is the exact object of the study ? Is the study about the perception of active volcanoes or of all volcanoes ? The introduction develops several arguments related to active volcanoes, however some of the poems considered concerns non-erupting volcanoes (eg as mentioned in the section about “Landscape”)

It is the perception of all volcanoes – nowhere do we state that that we focus on either erupting or active volcanoes. We have however specified so in Section 2.1.

– Please clarify throughout the manuscript that the results are about the poets’ perception of the interaction between Men-volcano (although it can be generalised to a certain extent) For example the way the RQ is formulated does not give an active role to the poets’ subjectivity (“RQ: what does poetry written about volcanoes reveal about the relationship between humanity and volcanoes?”, p5, l30-31), contrarily to the aims of the study given just before (“understand the way in which poets have interpreted the relationship between humans and volcanoes” (p5, l26-27))

In order to reconcile this apparent discrepancy, in Section 2.1 we have now specified

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that we consider poets to be representatives of humankind.

Specific comments p3, l13-19 Please clarify the main message of this paragraph. Is it to justify the choice of “significant eruption” (Table 5)? The eruptions impacting the most human societies are not necessarily those with bigger VEI, but that population can be affected significantly by small eruptions and associated hazards. With the development of medias, transportation, etc, information about an eruption -even small- can also reach much more people. Please in the introduction give explicit examples of various ways in which volcano and the link humanity-volcano can be perceived ? This could be done re-writing the section

This paragraph is indeed meant to lean into the choice of eruptions presented in Table 5. However, we are still in the introduction section here. We are not claiming that eruptions with bigger VEI impact human societies the most (or the most human societies), just that their aerial impact footprint are larger. We have expanded this paragraph to comment on the impact of small eruptions, and to highlight the role of communication means (p.3 l.17).

p4, l1-9 (“We can conceivably use art pieces to guide us in our understanding of how volcano-human relations have changed through time. [...]”), highlighting what the artworks demonstrates of the volcano-artist interaction, rather than eg describing the painting and the physical phenomenon.

We have added a couple of references to clarify this point.

p8, l40-42 “However, as outlined by Morse et al. (2002), our methodological coherence, sampling strategy, and saturation of emergent codes ensures the reliability, and thus repeatability, of our approach in this qualitative analysis.” Although I agree this approach would give similar results if the same two authors were to repeat the experiment, how can you ensure the results would be similar if the study would be carried out by two (or more) people, with potentially different backgrounds, etc and hence likely to interpret the poems differently ?

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Thank you for raising this important point. With qualitative research, different strategies in comparison to quantitative research must be adopted in order to ensure the credibility of the study findings. As you point out, it may be that other researchers arrive at slightly different conclusions, however this is the nature of all research. What we have done in this study is to maintain a ‘decision trail’, so that the reader (and any future researchers) can follow our analysis and the clear and transparent decisions that we have provided. However, we take your point that ‘repeatability’ might not be the most appropriate word here, and so the text has been changed to account for this and now reads: “. . . our methodological coherence, sampling strategy, and saturation of emergent codes ensures the reliability and trustworthiness of our approach in this qualitative analysis.”

p11, l10 “the poets perceived very clearly their [the volcanoes’] relationship with humanity”; p21, l32-33 “with humans ultimately of neither benefit nor concern to the volcanoes that they write about”: In several instances throughout the manuscript, such as in these examples, the authors personify the volcanoes. Please could you modify the manuscript such that it is clear in your analysis that the only subject(s) is/are the poet/humans and that all human emotions assigned to volcanoes are only perceptions. In the first example above, the sentence could be modified to eg “the poets perceived very clearly how humanity relates to volcanoes” (ie volcanoes are objects)

We have rephrased as suggested to make it clearer.

p11, l13-14 “poetry acts to position volcanoes as an awesome part of our shared landscape, perhaps explaining in part why humans were first drawn to them before they became valued for more tangible goods”: I suggest you suppress this assumption. Overall, population settlements are unlikely to have been drawn primarily by the beauty of an area. The people attracted by the spectacle given by active volcanoes are usually not the people who live nearby, and potentially risk their life and their families’, livelihood, properties, etc.

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We chose the term “awesome” carefully, because it designates something (in our case volcanoes) that inspires awe and is overpowering – not necessarily something that is beautiful.

p20, l21-22 “many communities are willing to accept the associated risks of living near a volcano, in order to experience the cultural and societal benefits” Could you precise if that is for active volcanoes ? During the 1995-pst eruption of Soufriere Hills, Montserrat, 75% of the population left the island which would contradict the statement above. Those who stayed, did not for the cultural and societal benefits, but mostly for either economical reasons, or because they could not imagine losing their roots.

It applies to both active (now précised) and inactive volcanoes. Economic reasons are also societal benefits, and “could not imagine losing their roots” is a cultural benefit, as we have explored in our analysis.

p22, l24-25: “the emergent unidirectional nature of this relationship, this study also challenges us to re-consider the importance of humanity in our interactions with volcanoes. Unlike many other elements of our natural environment that have a strong sense of cultural and social identity attached to them (for example, glaciers, rivers, and rainforests)” Please include in your introduction a short paragraph (perhaps at the very beginning of the paper) mentioning studies (possibly as yours) about interactions between other natural elements and humans

It would not be correct to include this in the introduction; this aspect emerged through the study, and we did not start with a pre-conception that that might happen. As such, we believe that this belongs where it is, in the conclusions. We have added references to three studies about interactions between other natural elements and humans.

p22, l28 “by anthropogenic climate change” Anthropogenic climate change is not the only way humans affect the environment.

That was only an example, and we have now specified that.

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p22, l28-31 “Indeed, aside from humans, volcanism is itself a key driver in shortterm climatic variations (Robock, 1991), with the net result a cooling at the Earth’s surface due to the scattering of incoming solar radiation by secondary sulphate aerosols formed from volcanic eruptions (ColeDai, 2010).”: Please suppress, this is outside of the topic.

Point taken, we have removed that sentence.

p23, l7-9 “We hope that this study has demonstrated that poetry is a powerful medium through which to consider perceptions of our natural environment, and that the results might better inform our communication with communities living nearby active volcanoes. Please suppress “We hope [...] that’, there is no need to demonstrate that, however could you indicate more practically how the results could be used to work with communities?”

We removed “We hope”. Additionally, we provided a practical example of how the results could be used to work with communities (p.23 l.10).

Technical corrections

p3, l11 “Certainly, they do not leave us indifferent” Please suppress this comment: that is the authors’ opinion, however it can surely not be applied to everybody, even those living near an active volcano.

It can be vastly applied indeed. We added a reference that supports our statement.

p3, l33 “yet while these works have great merit” Please suppress, it sounds condescending

We did not mean to be condescending. We have suppressed that in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

p3, l35 “volcanic activity clashes with human life” There is probably a less informal term than “clash” eg impact, affect, etc

We changed “clashes” to “conflicts”.

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p8, l39 “described here represents a somewhat subjective approach” Please suppress “somewhat”

We cannot suppress “somewhat”, as that would introduce an error: there are also objective elements in the analyses – e.g. the identification of very concrete themes (plants, animals...)

p18, l3 “respectful of the human space” No need to change your interpretation, but isn't it just a way to show that humanity can't be at peace, even when everything else is 'purified' by fire ?

We respectfully disagree with this interpretation. Moreover, there is no fire in volcanoes.

Figures 1 and 4: It would improve their readability (in particular the years) and help the comparisons between categories, if you would merge the various subfigures in one figure. For example you can use a color per category. Please also indicate what decades were not represented.

After preparing a new figure following the reviewer's suggestion, we feel that readability is much better in the current version.

p21, l6-8: This might in part be explained by the tensions between poetry and religion that had manifested themselves throughout the Victorian age Also, society and arts were impacted by WWI and WWII.

We thank the reviewer for the insight, but we feel that this takes the explanation too far. We were just offering one example. We do however welcome further research of course.

p21, l23 “that there is a strong sense of identity associated between humans and volcanoes”: Could you rephrase more clearly please ?

The meaning has been extensively explained before in Section 3.2, which is entirely dedicated to this theme and contains several examples.

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