The Image Speaks
The Image Speaks
An exhibition of photography of Phd research

Extended Essays

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Hamlet: 'I say, we will have no more marriages."
Ophelia: 'but dahling, mommy's already sent out the invitations.'

On May 13, Katle took Mike McEnery® as her lawful wedded husband and gave birth to the first hippie wedding. You were all invited to the gay outdoor nuptials; incense, rustic garlands, fans and drums, the fuzzy and muumus.

'We married', says Mike, 'on an impulse'. Previously they had lived together, separated, met again then decided to tripped up the aisle. 'It was the only thing left we hadn't tried'.

Marriage as kicks, as a happening, as a rave. If you must capitulate, that's the spirit.

But must you?

Now that even Women's Magazines are timidly suggesting that marriage is outdated...

It is obvious that the exuberant avant garde should still cherish their love through the Registry Office.

Old fashioned cynics regard marriage as merely a public declaration of a private intention and squint share the philosophy of the Andrew Sisters that love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage.

Others deride the role of love and hold marriage to be the function of the intellect alone, a convenient contractual arrangement, a device necessary for the rearing of children.

Marriage is more than this. Marriage is a masochistic ritual, an unhappy, anxiety ridden house. Most are disastrous.

Add to the meager statistics of divorce the number of dead partnerships existing under a façade deemed essential for social or breeding purposes—the spiritual divorce

Look around you. Look at your married contemporaries. A phrase like creating under the strain of compulsory cohabitation, their partnership rendered impotent by a future robbed of mystery, a love affair wet-blamed by the growing responsibilities of permanent contractual obligations.

Remember your parents? Look at them in their family album wedding photos. Look at them now . . . incessant hickering, relentless incompatibility, comforting desperate pleas for loyalty—the death legacy of 30 years of togetherness.

Some marriages work brilliantly, of course. For a while. But who needs it? How many enhance the original relationship?

Society should encourage pre-marital cohabitation. Parents should assist newly unmarriages to set up home, avoid pregnancies and take on responsibilities. Living in sin could be more than a chic prelude to marriage—why not a serious rehearsal for long term living together?

Relationships can be worked out fully and abandoned painlessly when breakups. There is a current craze to simplify divorce, a short term measure. Instead, marriage should be made more difficult or left to evolve into redundancy. Certainly human relations can be intellectually and emotionally fruitful and it is not suggested they should depend on the compatibility of crechets. However, 'marriages'—legal and/or spiritual—are less likely to degenerate into frightening signs of destruction if the participants are practiced.

The only problem of casual cohabitation is children. Means of support can be worked out.

The legal machinery used need not be complicated. This inability is able to deal far more intricate bills to deal with tax avoidance. At the moment the tax, typically, penalizes unmarried mothers by making the maximum by making the maximum support they can get from their fathers about $10 per week. Compare that with incentive destroying alimony awards.

Perhaps a crossed Kibbutz system could be applied to groups of people sharing accommodation. It might be more interesting than the domestic vegetable patch. (Removing the stigma from illegitimacy, incidentally, would remove pressure for abortion.)

While many affect to despise the institution of marriage, most are resigned to its inevitability. If not for themselves, for their friends. We urge all readers to accept Paul's classic advice to those on the verge— Just don't. It is better to live than to marry.
I. Lucy Brown
Department of History
The long-1960s is often viewed as the ‘Golden Age’ of marriage in Britain with more couples getting wed and at younger ages. Yet this was also a period which saw a widespread societal questioning of the true nature, necessity and future of marriage. These images convey this tension and the transition towards a plurality of different, more informal wedding styles.

The images include wedding photos from both the early-1960s and the mid-1970s. Note the contrast between the formality and rigidity of the earlier photo and the more casual dress and poses of the wedding group in the later photo. These photos usefully epitomise the huge transformation in terms of attitudes to intimacy and romantic relationships that occurred during the 1960s and 70s. The period witnessed the loosening of emotional restraint in favour of self-expression and a focus on the ‘personality’. By the mid-1970s it was expected that the marriage relationship would be a space for the development of one’s ‘self-understanding’. Arguments and frank, honest discussion were encouraged by authors of marital advice as a way to both know yourself and your intimate partner. Yet such a process could be difficult for many couples, especially older couples who had married in the previous decades when emotional expectations were not so high.

The period saw a boom in the publication of marriage manuals brought about by the arrival of cheap paperbacks. These books were advertised as essential guides to help couples in their negotiation of this new, more demanding version of intimate relationships. The image on display is of the cover of Allen Andrews’s Sex and Marriage from 1967.

However whilst these ‘experts’ sought to rework marriage for a modern world others questioned its continued relevance. Much of this criticism came from underground publications, novelists and later the feminist movement. The image of a 1967 article from underground magazine Oz conveys this tension.

Despite the assault on the older versions of intimacy and the rejection of marriage traditions, the marital relationship continued to be the most popular form of romantic relationship in Britain. Even the ‘hippie’ movement failed to reject it entirely, adapting the ceremony to a more carefree and individualist tone.
2. **Nigel Cavanagh**  
Department of History  
Industrialising Communities: A  
Case Study of Elsecar 1750-1860
In the late 18th century the village of Elsecar became the focus of intense development. Under the direction of the local landowners, the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam, the village was transformed into an integrated industrial complex that that was in many ways a microcosm of the industrial revolution. New deep coal mines provided fuel for an ironworks, which in turn smelted ore from the Earls' iron-stone mines at Tankersley. The resulting goods were transported on a network of canals and railways that the Earls financed. Finally, the growing numbers of industrial workers within the village were housed in new purpose-built houses.

The development of Elsecar, which in many ways presaged the emergence of mid-nineteenth century model industrial settlements such as Saltaire, has attracted considerable interest, with pioneering work being done by historians such as Arthur Clayton and Graham Mee. However, it is fair to say that much work to date has focused upon the role of the Earls as industrial entrepreneurs, at the expense of a wider consideration of the village as a whole. My PhD research therefore seeks to redress this by considering the village in terms of contemporary historical themes of authority, community and place. Firstly, I examine the nature of the paternalistic contract and relationship between the Earls and the villagers in greater detail than has been done before. Secondly, I will examine the village community in its widest sense, focussing upon the roles and lives of women, children, shopkeepers, the middle classes and others as well as the miners and iron-workers, and the ways in which these diverse people interacted. Finally the PhD will examine issues of place and space; how the village was organised spatially, how this influenced the pattern of daily life, and how the dangers of the emerging industrial landscape impacted upon a previously rural environment.

Elsecar today is fortunate in that it retains much of its original workers’ housing, together with the former Fitzwilliam workshops, canals and other parts of its industrial infrastructure. The extant historical remains form foci for remembering and celebrating Elsecar’s industrial past and in 2014 my external PhD partner, Barnsley Museums, who manage many of the remains, are preparing for a major reinterpretation of the village. Research from my PhD, together with work from volunteers, villagers and others, will inform this new interpretation.

The exhibition photograph shows part of the remains of the 18th century ironworks. For various reasons, this important element of the industrial infrastructure was bypassed during the renovation of the adjacent Fitzwilliam workshop complex in the 1990s and remains in a perilous and unconsolidated state. At the other end of the site lies the Newcomen Engine house, of broadly similar date, which has been described as one of the most important industrial heritage artefacts in Britain, and which is currently undergoing extensive renovation. The contrast between the fates of the two structures reminds us that heritage conservation, and indeed history, is an ongoing process; whilst one story is told and celebrated, another awaits discovery and rescue. Andy Brown’s photograph of the ironworks thus confronts us with a structure of undoubted age but unclear purpose; for me, it works as a powerful metaphor for the process of historical interpretation.
Maria-Jesus Inostroza A.
School of English

Teaching English to Young Learners in Chile: not an easy story to illustrate
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School of English

Teaching English to Young Learners in Chile: not an easy story to illustrate

This composite image is part of the Image Speaks project, which attempts to produce a visual outcome, to explain research projects developed by PhD Students from Faculty of Arts and Humanities. By participating in this project, I was able to organise my thoughts in order to explain the complexity of my field of study and express these ideas in images. At the beginning, it was difficult to convey the essence of my research in order to attract the observer's interest, because I had to tell this story by using a limited number of images.

These images were chosen from video recordings taken at classrooms in Chile as part of the data collection of my research project about teaching English to young learners there. I had to watch all videos (around 45 hours in total) and select the stills that reflected what I wanted to convey in the final composite image. It was a difficult process, since the aim of the original videos was to objectively record what was occurring in the lesson, and not produce emotionally engaging material.

I really wanted to transmit the message that teaching a foreign language as a school subject is not a simple task. It involves a lot of preparation and dedication in order to cope with situations and limitations. Teachers have to overcome uncontrollable aspects of the educational process such as time, lack of materials, students’ learning needs, and daily spontaneous decision taking.

About my research project

Teaching English to young learners in Chile is a challenge. Classrooms are overcrowded, with more than 38 students per class. Teachers’ proficiency in English is limited because they do not have opportunities to practice or they come from a different discipline. In most cases, appropriate methodologies to teach young learners are not available. In addition, most of the teachers have to deal with limited teaching resources.

With these difficulties in mind and based on my own experience as an English teacher, I designed a research project to try and identify the difficulties faced by Chilean teachers when teaching English. It also focuses on determining to what extent the strategies suggested in literature to develop listening and speaking skills of young learners are applicable to their educational context.

So far I have been able to identify that despite these challenges, teachers are committed to improving learning by using different and varied activities to help students develop their listening and speaking skills. The teacher participants implement activities such as videos, songs and role plays which allow their students to speak and listen to English language within a meaningful context and related to their own interests. However, there are still many factors that teachers cannot control. Teachers mentioned that they would like to have more time to use more of these engaging activities. For instance, they feel that they did not have enough time to prepare themselves for storytelling as it demands language proficiency as well as teaching resources. Similarly, they identified administrative tasks as time-consuming chores that constrained lesson planning.
4.  Ella Kent
School of English
It’s popular to talk about photography as a slice of time or a ‘frozen moment’. The time a photograph possesses in this approach is fleeting and referential. It points to time rather than contains it. In my research around graphic novels, temporality is communicated both within single frames (comic panels) and between them; time is a property of spatial arrangement as much as of direct reference. So too for a photograph in a contact sheet, the page of negatives from which analogue photographers once worked. Between each image is the time taken in the movement of the hand and the decision of the shot. The fractured composition which is the outcome of this piece gives its own references to time passing and the movement that goes with it. Frame by frame the steps lead to the figure and then the sky; the grass grows upwards.

Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible; it is not what we see.

*Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida*

I am in this picture, but not taking the photograph. The camera I’m holding refers to photography; its presence is self-referential in that it makes visible the technology of photography at work. But this piece is composed in an analogue medium that is now archaic in many of the functions for which it was once used (for example journalism) and is now viewed from a digital age with some nostalgia as a purer form of representation. Aside from the heightened anxiety about authenticity that digital imaging has provoked, digital technologies have reconfigured spatial relationships in ways we have barely begun to recognise.

The principle of forensics assumes two interrelated sets of spatial relations. The first is the relation between an event and the object in which traces of that event are registered. The second is a relation between the object and the forum that assembles around it and to which its ‘speech’ is addressed.

*Eyal Weizman, The Least of All Possible Evils*

In this piece the image stands for the material reality of the landscape; the relationship to the forum is configured through the medium and its surroundings. These photographs were taken on the site of a demolished complex of council housing. The concrete staircases and pathways remain, but without surrounding buildings they make little sense. Reading this scene physically would yield information about the process of destruction and what was there beforehand, but the material object would require a forum in order to ‘speak’. So too in this piece the photographic image requires a surrounding assemblage in order to communicate. This is made explicit by the interdependent arrangement of each panel. This piece then works on two levels: the picture refers to the space itself and the event of the housing site that bears traces, but the photograph is also part of the forum for the material which in turn must speak to those images around it before it can speak out of itself.
5. Matthew Kerry
Department of History
In March and September 1934 copies of the right-wing El Debate and ABC newspapers were seized by leftists and burned in the streets of Sama de Langreo and Mieres, towns in the mining valleys of Asturias on the northern coast of Spain.

1934 was a convulsive year for the Second Republic, proclaimed jubilantly in 1931 and which was submerged into a bitter Civil War in 1936. In October 1934 leftist groups in Asturias, particularly the mineworkers, embarked on a revolutionary insurrection, which lasted for two weeks and left around 2000 dead. Revolutionary militias fought the army while reorganising society and the economy along broadly socialist (and libertarian) lines. Newspapers and calls to surrender were dropped by the Spanish air force, but were promptly seized and burned by revolutionary patrols. One of the most important events of Second Republic, different experiences and interpretations of the Revolution would mould the unfolding of events until the elections of February 1936.

The burning of printed media in the 1930s is more generally associated with Nazism than with the left. Indeed, such a tactic employed by the left would seem to go against the strong emphasis on education and culture in the mining valleys. Over the previous twenty years, a dense network of cultural centres, theatres and lending libraries had been built. The burning of the newspapers demonstrates the tense atmosphere and strength of feeling by 1934, as these forms of direct action were foregrounded by groups on the left.

As a gesture, the burning of words is straightforward and decisive. It clearly delineates the left and the right, while belying the complexity of the past. There was a tendency to polarisation, but this should not conceal bitter differences within the left and right, riddled as they were with internecine rivalries and conflicts.

Clearly, copies of the Daily Mail were not burnt in Asturias in 1934. The use of the Daily Mail asks us to enter into a dialogue with the present. Nor is it simply a re-interpretation of an episode from 1934 in 2014. The image relates to my thesis in a broader way, raising questions about power, symbolism, culture and control. Actions such as these tell us important things about identity and community, in addition to providing an insight into how politics was lived and experienced, and also enacted.

In my thesis I try to understand how the Republic was built and lived at local level from its proclamation in 1931 to the Civil War in 1936. I explore the interaction of the local and the national in 1931 and 1932, and the conflict and calls for unity in 1933 and 1934, including how the workers’ alliance between anarchists, socialists and communists was formed in 1934. I also examine the place and relationship of the Church to local communities in the context of the anticlerical violence of the ‘Revolution’ of 1934, and the brutal repression of the ‘Revolution’ and how it was deployed during the elections of 1936. Much of this is based on the trawling of newspaper archives. Fortunately for me, while many archives were burnt during the Revolution and Civil War, most newspapers have survived. If all newspapers had been torched on bonfires, so much of the material on which my thesis is based would be beyond my reach.
Ángela Lavilla Cañedo
School of Languages and Cultures
(Hispanic Studies)
A red viscous liquid oozes, fills the surface, leaks... In this image, menstruation, which is the focus of my thesis on Spanish and Latin American literature, is depicted in a very indirect and symbolical way, decontextualised and lacking in any kind of recognisable reference. Moreover, it’s an intriguing image, because while it appears to be blood we cannot be completely certain that it is. This issue of ambiguity is an important and recurrent idea in my research.

The liquid in the photograph is red wine, which appears as a motif in the novels I study, often in the form of falling glasses of wine and subsequent red wine stains on surfaces, such as white table cloths or carpets. These cases are, in general, linked to a different kind of vaginal bleeding symbolism: that of rape or loss of virginity. These ideas are, in addition, culturally very close to the start of menses. In this way, my texts play with these imaginaries, enmeshing their meanings in an ambiguous way.

The saturation of red in the photograph recalls descriptions in which an uterine atmosphere is evoked. It could be an image taken directly from inside the body, within the walls of flesh, portraying different textures and viscous fluids. However, the ambiguity of the image could also imply that it refers to a reality outside of the body. In this way, the image challenges the idea of sealed and self-contained bodies, as portrayed in patriarchal societies, with fluids locked out of sight within the body. In my novels, menstruation often challenges this taboo; it reveals the interior of the body as it flows from the vagina.

This image also explores the issue of materiality. Menstruation in some of my novels is a metaphor for a different issue, especially traumatic and public experiences such as violence and torture in contexts of war and dictatorship. The materiality of menstrual blood in those cases can be seen as relegated to a second place - as if its corporeality must be erased to be legitimised as a theme in its own right. However, its appearance in these traumatic contexts can have the effect of shedding light on female perspectives, highlighting experiences which are generally overlooked and denouncing the way patriarchal societies judge, blame or control women’s bodies and sexualities.

I am very interested in visibility, in unveiling what has been and is being said about menstruation and how, and in the issue of transgression. It is not only about the pleasure of discovering imaginative descriptions and the subversion of traditional imaginaries, but it is also about the potential that powerful images and texts have to question predefined concepts and assumptions about menstruation. Nevertheless, the narrow ways from which menstruation is imagined in society, and its status as a taboo subject, limits the proliferation of rebellious representations. So, the question about what the motivations are when a author writes on menstruation or uses menstruation as a symbol is a particularly pertinent one. Exposing menstrual blood can be a political statement. This image is exactly that.
7. Joe Saunders
Department of Philosophy

Spontaneität
Immanuel Kant tells us that reason involves spontaneity. To be rational is to be determined by oneself, and not external sources. Here’s Kant himself:

[...] one cannot possibly think of a reason that would self-consciously receive guidance from any other quarter with regard to its judgements, since the subject would not then attribute the determination of judgement to his reason, but to an impulse. (IV: 448.13-7)

This claim that reason involves spontaneity ties into a larger claim that, as rational beings, we must act under the idea of freedom. This in turn relates to Kant’s ethics, and the crucial concept of autonomy – the idea of a self-determining being. The concept of individual autonomy is born with Kant. And all of this has its seat in the spontaneity of reason.

Kant does consider the possibility of an automaton spirituale, or thinking machine. The advent of computers makes this a live possibility. However, computers face problems of their own. One of the hard problems of computer science involves trying to compute the shortest distance between numerous cities – the so-called Travelling Salesman Problem.

All of this feeds into our image. Andy had the brilliant idea of reproducing one of Kant’s key terms in a non-conscious manner. Spontaneität seemed the right choice. Artist Mattias Jones constructed Kant’s mention of Spontaneität (complete with textual reference – IV: 452.18) out of a series of dots, and then employed specialist software to solve a Travelling Salesman Problem, traversing the shortest possible single line between these dots. We thereby spelled out and questioned Kant on the spontaneity of reason.
8. Nina Schmidt
School of Languages and Cultures
(Germanic Studies)
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8. **Nina Schmidt**  
School of Languages and Cultures  
(Germanic Studies)
The three images each show a body part of an ill or disabled person. Arthritis, multiple sclerosis and coeliac disease are invisible to any onlooker, but affect those inflicted with the conditions on a daily basis, and in manifold ways. The photos aim to challenge typical perceptions of what constitutes health, and draw attention to the diversity behind the terms illness and disability. In the case of ‘invisible’ disabilities, it is often a matter of actively claiming the term disability (or chronic illness) for oneself. Those living with these conditions regularly find themselves in situations, both in public and private, in which they must decide whether, and how, to share the information, and thus ‘come out’ with their ailment.

In a society in which presumed health is still the norm, sharing a less perfect story involves taking risks. Self- and externally determined image may clash in the moment of narration, and one becomes particularly vulnerable exposing less apparent facets of one’s identity. Often the ill person must be prepared for judgment. In an ableist environment, authenticity as well as the motives for ‘coming out’ with illness or disability may be questioned. A voyeuristic audience may find pleasure in regarding the ill as the ultimate ‘other’ – being equally intrigued as repulsed. Despite the risk of navel-gazing, it is only by taking their story into the public realm that those with hidden illnesses can establish lasting, individual connections with others, as well as change wider societal perceptions of illness and/or disability. Sharing illness therefore is a political, even ethical, act as much as it is one of personal importance.

This is at least, in a nutshell, what comes across in the literature that forms the basis of my work. All of the texts in my corpus have been published between 2007 and 2013, some by prolific and acclaimed authors, others by first-time writers. They tell of living through or living with a diverse range of experiences: breast cancer, trauma, aphasia, a brain tumor, a liver transplant or lung cancer which has given the authors’ lives, and their writing, a new perspective. Motivated by this notable new wave of autobiographical writing on trauma, illness and death, my PhD thesis on contemporary German-language literature takes a major interest in how the authors of autobiographically inspired illness narratives anticipate and deal with reactions by the media and the reading public, both within and beyond their texts. I analyse narrative strategies, aesthetic forms and publication media that are employed in this kind of life writing as much as that I focus on the unique context in which each of the narratives has been published. Furthermore I take care to pay attention to the reception they have received.

In the process of collaboration with Andy Brown, the element of invisibility that is inherent to certain conditions crystallised as the one we wanted to focus on. Our aim was to problematise this aspect in a triptych of photos, whilst acknowledging the paradox of taking images of something that is invisible to the naked eye. For me, what started as a public engagement project soon became an autobiographical experiment in sharing my very own, invisible chronic illness. Exposing my navel poster-size as one result of this project, I have gained a deeper understanding of what it might mean to be in the authors’ shoes whose books and whose bravery I have come to appreciate more and more.

http://www.shef.ac.uk/german/staff/ninaschmidt
9. Nicola Walker
Department of History

Hidden Spaces of Cannon Hall,
Barnsley
On visiting one of the England’s many stately homes you will almost always be greeted with a perfectly manicured, visitor-focused experience. The landscaping, décor and collections immaculately preserved to illustrate prime examples of design and architectural heritage. Beyond this highly maintained façade there are often different stories to be told. Rooms inaccessible to the public, mundane utilitarian spaces with few aesthetic qualities, lie untouched. However, these spaces can offer an alternative view of the house and how those that called it home would once have lived.

There are many spaces like this at Cannon Hall. The glamorous Georgian south front, impressive Victorian Ballroom and working kitchens offer the visitor an educational and interactive insight into the lives of the Spencer-Stanhope family that lived there for nearly 300 years. Yet, nothing which you see here is original. Like so many properties across the country, death duties gave the last owners little choice but to sell their assets and eventually the family home. Curators have worked to restore the past liveliness of the place and foster a sense of the home as it would once have been. The need to fill the vast spaces also gave them the opportunity to build an internationally important decorative art collection which fill the public spaces and offer visitors the opportunity to view the finest period art and furniture in an appropriate setting.

Beyond these fabricated spaces however there is perhaps a more genuine experience to be had. The photograph reveals the scene in the eighteenth century wine cellar. Amongst the furniture and artefacts of Barnsley’s civic history lie remnants of the historic house perhaps thought too insignificant to remove. Wine labels of port, madeira and claret hang in their original locations, while gargoyles collected by the family from local churches in the mid-nineteenth century now lie where the wine shelves would once have been, left over from a gothic inspired renovation of the garden once undertaken by the family’s daughters.

Beyond this cellar a web of passages lead through the original kitchens, stores and court yard. Hidden underground and closed in by later renovations, these now dark rooms would once have been illuminated by large windows visible through cracks in flagstones around the perimeter. Elsewhere early bathroom facilities, fireplaces and hidden passageways can be discovered. These spaces illustrate the flexibility and changing use of the country house. Once a hive of activity with those working to provide for the family above and housing a vast collection of expensive wines attesting to the wealth and status of its occupants, the cellar now protects the collections hidden and housed there. Never open to the public, these spaces are exempt from manicured presentation and retain much of their original integrity. As such offer the most unique insight into how Cannon Hall would once have functioned as a home, place of work and symbol of wealth and status for one of Yorkshire’s leading industrial families.
Jeremiah at the Potter’s House

18:11-12

Jeremiah 18:1-12

Jeremiah at the Potter’s House

In the 12./11. and 12.

There’s a potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

“Go down to the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.”

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

Go down to the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

And I’ll be in the potter’s house, where I will give you your message.

The potter’s house, where I will give you your message.
The photograph and annotated Biblical passage that collectively form my contribution to this innovative project aim to visually illustrate two of the most prominent aspects of my thesis “When the Bible Meets the Black Stuff: A Contextual Bible Study Experiment”. Although this thesis does have a strong methodological basis it primarily consists of two separate yet interconnected components: 1. the ethnographic study of coal mining culture in various villages within South Derbyshire and North-West Leicestershire, and 2. the facilitated creation of a contextual exegesis by a group of South Derbyshire coal miners. These two sections have been given their own titles, namely “Tracking down the Coal Mining Community” and “Unearthing Interpretation” in order to greater emphasise the different objectives of each section. The primary intention of my research is to explore whether the distinctive nature of coal mining as a profession and the exclusive working-class culture of South Derbyshire coal miners affects the way in which they, as both individuals and a collective, may read and interpret Biblical texts.

The main method through which a culturally-embedded reading of this nature can be collected is through Contextual Bible Study (CBS). The purpose of CBS is to bring together individuals who self-identify as belonging to a shared culture or context to read Biblical texts in light of their communal identity, with the ultimate intention of using the texts to reflexively address their unique social-economic/political circumstances. Upon this reflection participants often then embark upon some form of positive change or transformation. This methodology therefore deliberately privileges readings produced through a specific cultural lens, with my own research highlighting and privileging the contextual lens of South Derbyshire coal miners. My research in particular emphasises a secular use of CBS in a bid to critically refine and methodologically streamline the process, to address the current lack of academic knowledge concerning working-class hermeneutics and to redirect the gaze of British Biblical Studies towards the uncharted exegetical landscape of home.

Over a ten month period I facilitated monthly CBS sessions with a group of South Derbyshire coal miners. Here we focused on reading ten specially chosen passages that explored a selection of themes, each of which arose from the previous year’s ethnographic research.

The two images selected to represent my research work together to illustrate the reading of Jeremiah 18:1-12 produced by the group during a CBS session. This session’s primary aim was to explore the theme of the often volatile working relationship that develops between the company, management and workforce in the British coal mining industry. The participating coal miners used Jeremiah to explore their recent experiences of involuntary redundancy and their subsequent feelings of betrayal and injustice, the nature and reality of authority and power, the declining state of the British coal mining industry and how their vocation was not a job for life as they were previously promised. To further explore this reading we visited the site of the now closed Oakthorpe Colliery in North-West Leicestershire. Here the participating coal miners reflected further on their experiences of losing the vocation that came to undeniably and irrevocably define them as individuals.

Tiffany Webster
Department of Biblical Studies
“A Job for Life...”
The Image Speaks
An exhibition of photography of Phd research

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Andy Brown www.envioustime.co.uk