

The

Image

Speaks

An exhibition of
photography of
PhD research by
Andy Brown

Extended Essays —
Featuring

- 1. Aysha Musa**
- 2. Charlotte Waller-Cotterhill**
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Aysha Musa

School of English
(Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies)



1.

Aysha Musa

School of English

(Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies)

This image is a reimagined version of the many iconic artistic depictions of the biblical characters Jael and Sisera from the Book of Judges, chapters 4 and 5. Such iconic images include Artemisia Gentileschi's *Jael and Sisera*, Bartholomäus Spranger's *Jael killing Sisera* and Giovanni Francesco Romanelli's *Jael Slays Sisera*. The narrative of Jael and Sisera is characterised as a sexual one, with many scholars seeing Jael as a *femme fatale*. My image has been staged in a way that strips all markers of gender and sexuality. Further, my image has been brought into the twenty-first century through the characters dress and modern styled weapons.

My thesis focuses on the construction of gender and sexuality in the biblical Book of Judges with specific attention being paid to the characters of Jael and Sisera. The proposed title of my thesis is Jael and Genderfuck; Constructions of Gender and Sexuality.

I am investigating the construction of Jael, a female character from the biblical book of Judges, paying particular attention to how she is framed in both masculine and feminine ways. My thesis interrogates gender constructions and stereotypes throughout, and involves looking at the dichotomy of roles and behaviours that are socially and historically considered male or female. Some examples include passiveness and activeness, and nurturing and violence. I am looking at these gendered roles with the aim of revealing that gender and gender roles are social constructions rather than occurring from

biological difference as Simone de Beauvoir recognised.^[1] I aim to reveal that the narrative of Jael and Sisera is relevant and applicable to a twenty-first century audience through engaging with a range of gender critical theories including feminist and masculinity theories, queer theory and genderfuck, as well as to destabilise gender binaries and the boundaries of being 'female'.^[2] I aim to question the ways in which sex, gender and sexualities are constructed and normalised as well as how they are regulated and controlled.

Crucially, through the use of gender criticism I plan to explore ways in which the normalisation of sexed categories can be subverted, as it is in this subversion where change can be brought about to societal understandings of sex and gender. Through engaging with gender critical theories, I aim to break the constructed idea of binaries and challenge the systems that produce them by questioning, displacing, reframing or queering the dominant conceptual paradigms.

What I want to emphasize is that my thesis is not just about looking at how gender norms might have shaped the construction of characters in biblical texts such as the Book of Judges: it is about seeing what importance they might have for situations in the world today where the Bible remains a significant text. It is my belief that this thesis has much to offer, as the Bible is not detached from our culture or our cultural controversies, with the Bible often being used as a regulating discourse, a cultural text of considerable significance and influence.

[1] Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St.Ville, "Judith Butler-In Theory" in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*

[2] Teresa J. Hornsby, Hornsby, Teresa J., "The Annoying Woman: Biblical Scholarship After Judith Butler" in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*

Charlotte Waller-Cotterhill

Department of Archaeology



2.

Charlotte Waller-Cotterhill

Department of Archaeology

The archaeological study of technology contributes to a broader understanding of past cultures, it illustrates the introduction and acceptance of new objects and production techniques whilst also teaching us about changes in past economies, social structures, and political organizations in relation to the invention or adoption of past technologies. By considering the technological process behind the production of an artefact, your understanding of the material culture is broadened and materials become viewed as composite things, purposely chosen for a reason or process, they have value.

The study of technology and craft plays a major role within archaeological research, from experimental flint knapping and glass production to roundhouse building and ceramics, people have long researched the ways in which man has interacted with materials, environments and created things. Vast amounts of literature have been dedicated to the study of craft specialisation, value and exchange networks and as such, it could be argued that it is important to consider the craft collaborations, interactions and interrelationships at play between multiple technologies – and materials – in order to create a broader perspective of historical expertise and demonstrate the social, cultural and behavioural factors which influence an item's construction.

This research is primarily concerned with two types of prosthesis used during the nineteenth century; the peg and Anglesey leg. Used by the two extremes of society, the poor and rich respectively, this research is interested in the production, distribution and use of these variations in order to develop a greater understanding of social relationships, manufacturing skill and choice of material involved. This research will fill in existing gaps in our understanding of the craft and its role within society through the utilisation of interdisciplinary analysis, including the historically accurate reconstruction of both a peg and Anglesey leg. Largely under-researched within archaeology, prostheses offer an interesting insight into people relationships with physical disability and their ability to restore movement creates a fascinating dialogue into their social, environmental, physical and cultural role within societies. The examination of surviving post-medieval prosthetic devices combined with contextual analysis offers greater insight into the origins of the state-of-the-art engineered prosthesis used today, for it is here we see developments of a specialised industry of prosthesis science working in unison with medical physicians. This combination of data will contribute to defining different dimensions of production, consumption and symbolism, consequently providing deeper insight into the early evidence of the standardised use of prosthesis.

This series of still life images show the main materials used in the manufacturing process of artificial limbs during the nineteenth century, they include; lime wood, ash, leather and catgut tendons. The images depict the simplicity of the materials involved in production, highlighting their easily accessible nature which is discussed in much of the contemporary data. Literature from the time suggests people requiring peg legs often made their own from materials around their homes. Likewise, the images also demonstrate the eclectic variety of skills necessary to combine in order to produce prostheses. Carpenters, cobblers, clock makers, armourers, tanners and blacksmiths are all recorded as transferring their skills over to artificial limb making. Engaging with technical processes and materials reveals dynamic relationships between craftsmen and their environment, however due to the competitive and secretive nature of this industry, the technological process of manufacture has largely been lost to history. Which is why this research endeavours to fill in the gaps by recreating the material and technical processes. It was important therefore for the photographs to demonstrate the raw textures, grains and colours of the materials in their unworked state, rather than depicting a completed artificial limb. This was to represent the information that is already understood about prosthesis science during the nineteenth century and also highlight how much we still have left to learn.

Jo Henderson-Merrygold

School of English
(Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies)



3.

Jo Henderson-Merrygold

School of English

(Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies)

Meet Jacob...

When we encounter someone new, whether meeting them face-to-face, on-line or through a text, we quickly make a judgement about their sex or gender. It is so quickly done that for many of us we rarely give such snap decisions a second thought. Yet underpinning that assumption are two key norms to which I wish to draw attention. Firstly, we primarily assume people are either male or female; rarely both, neither or some other description which exists outside the mutually exclusive binary. Secondary we assume that people can only have ever been that identity... unless they expressly indicate otherwise. Trans theorist Julia Serano calls this framework a cis-assumption and she posits the idea that such an assumption is a cis birthright. So, what does it mean to be cis, i.e. cisgender or cissexual? At its core, it means to (at least) predominantly identify with the gender and sex with which you were assigned at birth; you couldn't imagine yourself living as a different gender or sex to that most commonly associated with you. In other words, most of the time you are ordinarily accepted as a man, having been recognised and brought up as a boy. Yet to accept that as a norm and a valid assumption is to, at best, disregard and, at worst, dehumanize those who do not fall within such narrow parameters.

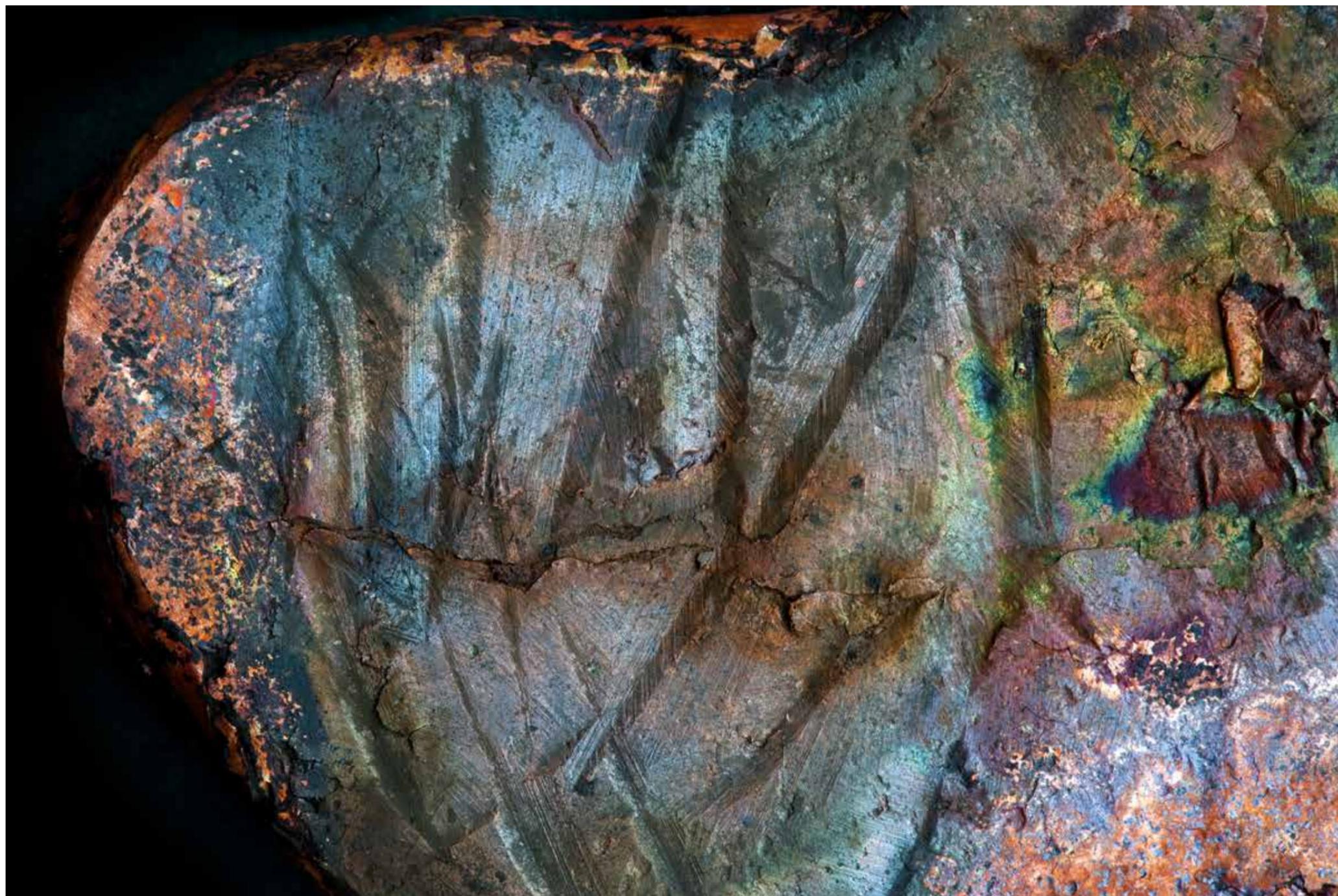
Which is what brings us to Jacob, and to Biblical Studies. Cis-assumptions are dangerous because they validate and valorise those who conform to the norms, so it is important to

identify those who challenge and confront the cis-birthright. Where better to seek such characters than inside a book which holds such religious and cultural significance? The Bible continues to function as a representative text; one in which we can find ourselves. So why is it such little work has been done to challenge cis-assumptions when we read them into the biblical narratives? We unconsciously make all sorts of assumptions about characters, such as Adam and Eve, or Mary and Jesus, reshaping them in our own image. With that in mind, I am arguing in my PhD that we need to identify and confront our casual assumptions and read against an assumption of cisgender characters. Instead, we need to apply the queer theory of Jack Halberstam which encourages us to follow whimsies and focus on the micro and inconsequential details. They can rupture our expectations and allow us to identify inconsistencies which give us windows into trans and non-binary experiences. As such, it is my great pleasure to re-introduce you to Jacob, the Patriarch and heir to the legacy of Abraham: the one after whom the nation of Israel was named. Let me highlight their feminine childhood, and the act of drag enacted to fool their father that Jacob was the eldest sibling, quintessentially masculine Esau. I invite you to reread the story (Genesis 24-49) and identify inconsistencies with cis norms and consider the possibility that there may be more to Jacob than previously considered.

¹ Serano calls it a cissexual assumption in *Whipping Girl* (2016[2007]), preferring the term cissexual to cisgender, which has gained greater parlance since the book was initially published in 2007; something she acknowledges in the foreword to the second edition.

Lenore Thompson

Department of Archaeology



4.

Lenore Thompson

Department of Archaeology

Things are caught up in life, and their significance is relational, contextual, and fundamental to human exploits. Things submit to and resist action in equal measure. In doing so they stand in testament to their own character which has been honed not only to incorporate the intended and unintended consequences of human action, but also those of what some call the 'natural world'. The significance of things and materials can only be appreciated in a living world that unites substance with form, and culture with nature, resisting their fragmentation.

The privilege of spending time with things, especially things that have lived long and well, comes with a responsibility to tell their stories. As their biographer, the archaeologist researches and documents their diverse and changing lives; their travels, relations, rites of passage, injuries, and repairs. The biography centres on the thing, but extends its affiliations and alliances to incorporate individual discrete things into broader classes or assemblages. In this way, routine and exceptional biographies can be highlighted. This intimacy with things is never shared in typological categorisation; things are reduced to something less than themselves, to an essentialised form that stands as much for the disciplined machinations of those who corral them into a silent order.

Metals are so often thought of as an artificial material, a substance wrought using skilful work and fire. While true for much of what we see today, the earth has also fabricated native metals in an unhurried manner, crystallising over aeons. Communities that have recognised and used native copper in their fabrication of metal artefacts highlight this dual inheritance of things. Copper, whether from geological strata or a metallurgist's furnace, invites specific skills and shares a recognisable character which serves to confound our division of the world in terms of nature and culture. If the image here speaks then it does so in a stereophonic chorus of nature and culture in fusion. The fragment of native copper has assumed landscape-like qualities, inviting the possibility of exploration and adventure. Like all landscapes, there is a bewildering temporality; copper of geological age shows a finely striated surface resulting from endless tumbling among river gravels, which is overlain by the footprints of iron hammers used in its subsequent forging.

Material flows through ever-changing forms, and these transformations follow a path that is illuminated by the fiery glow of the furnace and marked by the generative rhythms of the smith. Yet the same fire that encourages transformation and provides the rich iridescent colouring, seeks also to consume material with oxidic processes that erode form in exchange for a nacreous beauty.

In carrying forth its own history in the folds, dents, scratches, and burnishes, a thing speaks of its production, exchange, ownership, use, and destruction. However, these same unique material histories prevent any artefact from ever sitting truly comfortably in a category with others, and it is of these histories that things speak and it through them that we might hear, or more widely gain a *sense*, of their value.

Liz Trueman

School of Languages and Cultures
(French and Germanic Studies)



5.

Liz Trueman

School of Languages and Cultures
(French and Germanic Studies)

During the nineteenth century, ghost stories proliferated as never before throughout northern Europe. The century witnessed a literary fascination with supernatural phenomena, now recognised in Britain as the Gothic movement. Novels were designed to mimic the real world inhabited by the reader, before introducing dreaded, unearthly events such as dead bodies suddenly coming to life (Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1818); or a female love interest being revealed as no more than a mechanised doll with human eyeballs implanted in its face (Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann*, 1816). In literary criticism, the moment where these ghastly events turn reality upside down is known as uncanny. The occurrence or revelation is not merely frightening; it also challenges the laws of reality as we know them and realises the things we most dread. Other examples from the literature of this period include the portrait of a bloody corpse materialising in real life and taking a character as her husband (Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794); or a man whose reflection in the mirror is erased (Maupassant's *Le Horla*, 1887).

Freud proposes that the feeling of the uncanny is always linked to an instinctive dread being realised. Most commonly, this dread is associated with the living turning out to be dead, or mechanised; or conversely, the dead or immobile springing to life. Uncanny literature plays with the most fundamental laws of our existence on earth, and breaks these laws to incarnate an experience of terror. Such terror is comparable to some public reactions to the pace of scientific

discovery during the nineteenth century. Publications such as Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) shook the foundations of society by challenging our fundamental understanding of human history. Likewise, experiments in medical research astonished audiences in lecture theatres such as La Salpêtrière in Paris, where the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) hypnotised women who were deemed to suffer from "hysteria". The nineteenth century repeatedly challenged society's understanding of reality, a sensation that was mimicked in the writings of uncanny literature.

In my thesis, I seek to explore nineteenth century texts which overtly combine the scientific and the uncanny. My key authors play with the astonishing new discoveries offered by contemporary science by depicting them as side by side with our instinctive dread of the supernatural becoming real. During a century where the laws of the earth as we understood them were shaken, authors teased the lines between reality and impossibility, science and the supernatural.

A succinct description of the perversion of reality by the uncanny is given by Slavoj Žižek: "the alteration of a small detail in a well-known picture that all of a sudden renders the whole picture strange and uncanny." This quotation was my inspiration for taking part in *The Image Speaks*. Through photography, it would be possible to recreate Žižek's metaphor. The public would gain an understanding of the uncanny in

seconds, without having to read an entire novel. Moreover the uncanny, which is at the heart of my research endeavour, could be not only communicated, but experienced. It is hoped that the audience will first accept this photograph as depicting a newborn baby, before experiencing an uncanny thrill when they read a label revealing the newborn to be a lifeless doll. Our audience will experience the same human reaction to these photographs as readers in the nineteenth century experienced when reading their uncanny novels.

¹ Žižek, Slavoj, *Looking Awry: an Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991) p. 53

Lucy-Paige Hamilton

School of English



6.

Lucy-Paige Hamilton

School of English

Social Responsibility in Post-colonial Hong Kong; A Creative Approach

In three months the children had learned 'yukky'. The flatness of their vowels was a constant reminder of the influence Paige's own Northern English was having. She hoped their parents would be grateful and conclude that their school fees were being put to good use.

Watching the children watch her, smiling when she smiled, and sticking their tongues out in unison, their absolute trust in her still felt bizarre. She glanced up at Claudi who had resumed stamping handbooks. She too, was mouthing the words and bobbing her head in time with the melody. And if Mrs Cheung was happy, and the children were calm, so was Paige. Or, at least, less inspired to re-interpret the curriculum.

New rhyme, new colour, and new letter each week. But they would do it, just like they had re-learned 'if you're happy and you know it'. They could see that Miss Paige was and so they would be too.

The Native English Teachers were spectacles most days. It was hard to remember, after they had acclimatized to the heat and the stares, that there were places in the world in which you had to be something other than white to find employment. They were all first-class graduates but, here, their greatest achievement was being born white. Paige was beginning to see the point her interviewer had been laboring, that she had only joked about with Lizzie when she called.

'What did she ask? Any tips?'

'She told me it helps that I'm blonde.'

*(extract from my creative project,
'The Widening of Tolo Highway')*

During a year spent teaching in the Hong Kong's New Territories, I wrestled creatively with the experience of belonging to a privileged minority of Western expatriates. In the globalized mega-city, the demand for native English teachers, "NETs", promised comparatively high, disposable salaries for relatively stress-free work. [1] The effect of this privilege upon individual identity, however, felt somewhat paradoxical. Whilst a "Western" image may connote ideological notions of 'progressiveness' and 'individualism' [2], branding expatriate with a cultural identity also has a dehumanising effect, both limiting the feeling of individual agency and contributing to a superiority complex. [3]

It is this identity "stamping" that my collaboration with Andy Brown captures; the image features a name stamp used to mark kindergarten handbooks, thus eliminating messy NET signatures. Often, even name stamping was done on our behalf; the risk that we might smudge deemed too great. The black background reflects my experience of the omission of personality from the uniform 'NET' image propagated by contemporary Hong Kong culture.

By comparing literary accounts of expatriation in Hong Kong from the 1950s to the present, my interdisciplinary research examines how social, spatial and political tensions underpin this "pro-West" sentiment. I then explore the capacity of creative fiction to resolve these resultant identity paradoxes and, in so doing, contribute to a more socially responsible expatriate culture?

[1] Xu Xi, 'Writing the literature of non-denial', in *World Englishes*, 19.3, pp.415-428, (2000).

[2] Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[3] Malcolm MacDonald, 'Introduction', *A Many-Splendoured Thing*, (Oxford: The Reprint Society, 1954).

Nicola Thorpe

Department of Archaeology



7.

Nicola Thorpe

Department of Archaeology

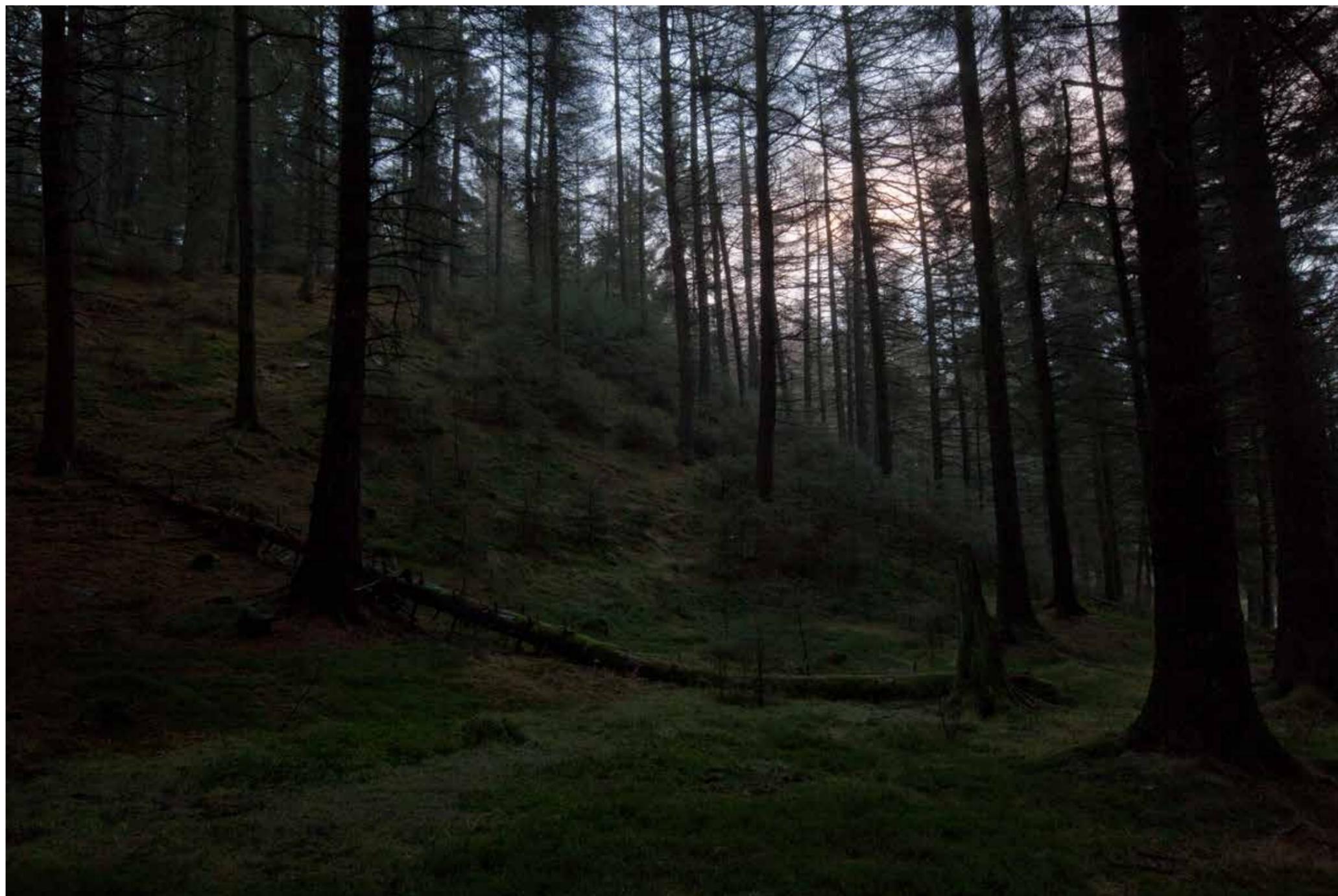
When the opportunity to sign-up for participation in The Image Speaks Project 2017 arose, I jumped at the chance. As someone who found it a challenge to talk succinctly about the nature of my research, the idea of trying to compose an image which encapsulated the key messages and complexities of that research was intriguing – and potentially helpful. The focus of my research is archaeological grey literature, the unpublished products of commercial archaeology. My thesis explores the practical and theoretical structures and principles which impact upon the creation, and subsequent use-value of grey literature in archaeology. I am in the final stages of my research, and I find my thoughts are occupied with pulling together all the threads and ideas I have generated, as well as challenging some of my earlier preconceptions and assumptions.

The Image Speaks project is designed around the principles of co-production: a collaboration between me, a PhD researcher, and Andy Brown, the photographer, with help and encouragement from the other project participants. The early stages of the project involved a series of participant-led seminars – where we each summarised our research, and shared thought-provoking or inspiring images. These tasks helped provide the groundwork for our later one-to-one discussions with Andy. When Andy and I met to discuss my research, he was fascinated by the role of commercial archaeology – and the transformative process of archaeological site to commercial development, off-set by the rather uninspired by-product of an archaeological grey literature report. (It must be noted that I do not underestimate my influence in his ‘reading’ of this seemingly unequitable legacy. I am content to talk at length about my own commercial archaeology experiences and the sites I have excavated.) We agreed that visiting and photographing a site I had first-hand experience of would be the best option. A few weeks later, we found ourselves travelling down a pot-holed track, towards our destination - a very unglamorous slip-road on the A1.

The image Andy produced was actually very unexciting – and it was perfect. It encapsulated the inspiration for my research: the perceived limitations of archaeological grey literature, and the connotations that term engenders. But it also did much more than that. It added a further dimension to the process of reflective learning I have inevitably found myself undertaking, as I enter the latter stages of my research. Previously I had only ‘revisited’ a commercial site through the medium of grey literature. Now I was forced to confront this (rather pitiful) non-space – there really is no other way to describe it. I realised an additional, but by-no-means less important transformation had taken place as a result of the archaeological intervention: one not of material into text, but of place into non-space. Each transformation seemingly abstracting the very essence of that place further and further away from our consciousness. The project has definitely helped me, however not necessarily in the ways I first envisaged. Perhaps I’ll always struggle to find the words to adequately explain my research, or perhaps my experiences on The Image Speaks project has just opened up a whole new vocabulary.

Robin Hamon

Department of Philosophy
(Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies)



8.

Robin Hamon

Department of Philosophy
(Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies)

Trees and text

The story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden is one of the most well-known and influential texts in the whole of Western literature. The story has inspired countless interpretations across a variety of media including literature, art, drama, film, music and advertising. My research analyses this story from an ecological perspective. It focuses on the depiction of trees in the text and exploring the text as it is produced in the physical form of a Bible within a complex network of natural materials, human labour, marketing, distribution, interpretation and ultimately disposal. So how was this captured photographically?

I was very keen for this project to be collaborative; I wanted an image that was clearly inspired by the topic of my research, but also an image that reflected Andy's specific skills as a photographer. I met with Andy over coffee and we discussed my work in detail. Two workable ideas for an image emerged. Andy suggested that we visit a local paper mill and take some pictures of paper being manufactured from wood pulp. An image that documented the conversion of trees into paper to form texts was very appealing to me, as I felt it would reflect the interrelationship between trees and wider cultural systems that is central to my research. Unfortunately, we had to discount this concept as there were no longer any paper mills open locally.

The second idea was inspired by my observation that in the Hebrew text of Genesis the garden of Eden consists exclusively of trees. Andy knew of a woodland area in the Peak District that he thought might closely represent this textual depiction. There was potential to take photographs both within the woodland and from a higher vantage point looking over it and Andy suggested that we visited the location at sunrise to capture the earliest light and the mist evaporating from the forest. The location was very varied – within a few hundred metres were dense pine trees, a shallow stream cutting through the forest, an open clearing that allowed more daylight into the shots, and longer views looking over the tree canopy. The diversity of this location provided around 30 photographs in contention for the final image.

The image selected reflects the relationship between trees and culture in a subtle yet profound manner. Consider that this is not a wild forest, but that the majority of trees in the photograph are planted and managed pine trees. In the foreground of the shot is a clear space; a footpath created by walkers regularly passing through the space. The naturally felled tree interrupting the path reminds us that no matter how far humans attempt to manage the natural, it is capable of responding in unpredictable ways. Hence, this image, like my research, reflects the dynamic interactions and interrelationships between humanity and nature that are evident in the vibrant physical world we share.

Acknowledgements

Like most exhibitions, The Image Speaks wouldn't have happened without a colossal effort from many different people and organisations. Photographer Andy Brown and the 8 PhD students involved have worked tirelessly to understand each other's perspectives and produce work that has both artistic and intellectual integrity.

The aim of the project, to give PhD students in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities a chance to work with an external partner on a public engagement project which both showcases their research to a wider audience and provokes reflection on their own work, can be seen both in the exhibition photographs, their labels and in the essays that accompany each piece of work. Every student has engaged with the process of working with Andy on many different levels and it is testament to the collaboration that the exhibition produced stands alone as an art show and has also provoked deeper reactions and thoughts about research and public engagement.

We are grateful for the support of Arts Enterprise in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and funding provided by the Higher Education Innovation Fund, without which this exhibition would not have been possible.

Lastly, from a Faculty point of view, it is a privilege for us to work with students who are sure of the value of their research but are also willing to be challenged, confronted and provoked by those within and outside the academy. The resulting exhibition, I hope you'll agree, has been worth their risk.

Amy Ryall,
Sheffield,
April 2017

The Image Speaks

An exhibition of
photography of
PhD research by
Andy Brown

Supported by Arts Enterprise
Designed by: thecafeteria.co.uk
Andy Brown: envioustime.co.uk

