Image

The

Speaks
An exhibition of photography of PhD research by Andy Brown

Extended Essays —
Featuring

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School of Languages and Cultures

1.
Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) is an initiative introduced in 2006 by the Department of Health to address the limited availability of psychological therapies, and improve service access to people who suffer from depression and anxiety disorders. My study was designed to expand the knowledge base and to better understand the language and cultural challenges that Black and Minority Ethnic patients (BME) may face when accessing IAPT.

My interest in this subject area started during my experience as a mental health worker working with BME patients, where I became aware of some of the difficulties patients from these backgrounds face when they access mental health services. Communicating emotions with cultural influences from other cultural traditions and accessing services set up under a ‘western’ tradition can make the communication harder. For this reason, I became interested in understanding how Muslim patients from Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen in the Sheffield area express their emotions.

I realised that a large number of these patients who I interviewed, integrated an Islamic perspective to their understanding of good emotional wellbeing. Religion played an integral part in providing patients with meaning, explanation, and healing for their distress. Particularly, there was emphasis on the “heart” as a central organ for the physical and spiritual well-being of a person to achieve better psychological functioning. In order to achieve purification of the heart and cleansing the soul from ill thoughts, patients emphasised a healthy attachment with Allah (God). Reciting the Quran (the holy book of Muslims) and the remembrance of Allah were one of the Islamic rituals to overcome distress and bring calmness to their lives. The effective words of the Quran and calling Allah’s names brought comfort to patients’ hearts, peace to their minds, and drove away the darkness of depression.

Capturing the image of this healthy attachment with Allah presented through the purification of the heart was not an easy task. After discussion with Andy we came to the idea of photographing an anatomical teaching model showing problems with the heart. He presented it in a way that makes it intriguing and mysterious to the spectators. For me, this image encapsulates the relationship between the sound heart and the heart that has become diseased as described in the Quran. The sound heart which is able to see the truth, can lead other organs towards practicing the actions of faith, and the heart that has become diseased can no longer function making it harder for the truth to be recognised. This is the interpretation of the Quranic verse in Arabic language as cited below the photograph. Thus, the person with the diseased heart can be attacked by more whispers and doubts. This photograph helps to understand how sickness of the heart would be thought of very differently by different cultures, and the Islamic metaphorical view of the heart in relation to mental health is one perspective which can potentially offer a much deeper insight into individuals’ world views.

1.
Katherine Calvert
School of Languages and Cultures (Germanic Studies)
Idealised images of womanhood are everywhere. These images, which are informed by social and political ideologies, relate to everything from superficial elements of women’s appearance to ideas of how women should, and should not, behave, including in intimate aspects of their personal lives, such as their reproductive choices. Indeed, women’s mothering capacity is a highly emotive, politicised and romanticised topic. Social, political and religious discourses have had, and continue to have, a significant impact on the way we think and talk about motherhood and womanhood.

In my photograph, we sought to capture the idea that women are continually confronted with idealised images of womanhood. Romanticised and glamorised images of women have been projected onto me, the woman in the picture, almost obscuring me. However, by staring back into the camera lens, we reflect the fact that women can, and do, engage with and challenge these ideas.

The projected images in my photograph are particularly familiar today, with our constant exposure to photoshopped photographs of celebrities and the curated social media profiles of so-called ‘influencers’, who publish aspirational, staged pictures of themselves engaging in everyday activities. However, the prevalence of idealised images of womanhood and motherhood is not a new phenomenon.

My research examines the representation of motherhood in non-fiction and fiction texts by left-wing women writers in Weimar Germany (1919–1933), where competing, ideologically-informed conceptions of womanhood and motherhood were widely circulated via advertising, print media, film, and through political and social organisations.

The Weimar Republic, founded in 1919 as a modern democracy, represented a clear departure from the immediate past and authoritarian Imperial era (1871–1918) in Germany. The Weimar Republic brought a period of cultural modernisation, and, for women, equal constitutional rights and greater opportunities in the public sphere. However, the Weimar Republic also saw enduring economic and political instability and conservative gender politics remained prevalent, including within the socialist and communist movements, which tended to prioritise the class struggle over questions of gender equality.

My research examines how left-wing women writers sought to reconcile competing political, social and feminist discourses around motherhood in Weimar Germany.

I explore the extent to which women writers challenge idealised, often essentialist notions of motherhood and propose new models of mothering in their work. I ask whether such proposals necessitate a rupture between female generations and consider portrayals of mothers who formed part of the pre-World War I generation, as well as mother–daughter relationships, and the authors’ discussions of the reproductive choices available to and made by women of their own generation, who were in their twenties and thirties during the Weimar era.
Jade Johnson
School of Languages and Cultures (Gemanic Studies)
The chair looks out of place there. The image of a modern, artificially coloured chair placed upon a natural landscape is striking. It represents the meeting of modernity with tradition. This merging of two worlds shapes my thesis. I explore how authors reacted to the modernisation of the Swiss Alps during the nineteenth century. I consider how these initial literary reactions contributed to the construction of Swiss national identities.

Switzerland is the poorest country in Europe in natural resources, since seventy per cent of its terrain is mountainous. It has nevertheless become one of the world’s wealthiest countries. This is, in part, the result of the relationship Switzerland forged with Britain during the nineteenth century. The British began flocking to Switzerland in order to tour the country’s greatest asset: the Alps. British Romantic writers, such as Lord Byron and the Shelleys, arrived in the early nineteenth century. Mary Shelley disliked the manners of her fellow English travellers, claiming: ‘[They] make this place another Keswick.’¹ Mass tourism soon followed, as Thomas Cook conducted his first trip to Switzerland in 1863. This escorted tour was documented by Jemima Morrell of the accompanying Junior United Alpine Club. Morrell encountered German tourists on her travels in Switzerland, including ‘that rollicking young fellow in grey suit and blue spectacles’ and a mule-riding ‘German gentleman of comfortable dimensions.’² The time was ripe for mutual national stereotyping and myth-making, which writers reflected in their literature.

Mass tourism arrived in Switzerland from many corners of Europe and the USA. The crossing of Swiss borders – literal and metaphorical – manifested in works of literature, both fictional and non-fictional.

My thesis explores German–Swiss, British and German literary reactions to Switzerland’s newfound cosmopolitanism during the nineteenth century. Literature from and about Switzerland followed the trajectory that was being mapped out by tourists, whilst the tourists followed the routes set by the writers of contemporary Anglo–German travel guides, such as John Murray’s *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland* (1838), which inspired Karl Baedeker’s *Die Schweiz: Handbüchlein für Reisende* (1844).

My study provides a comparative cultural history which is underpinned by my close textual analyses of the project’s primary texts. Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* (1880–81) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Final Problem* (1893) form the fictional part of my corpus. Having both lived in and travelled around Switzerland, Spyri and Conan Doyle apply fictional stories to realistic settings, which I contrast with John Addington Symonds’ non-fictional life writing in *Our Life in the Swiss Highlands* (1892) and the abovementioned travel guides. Literature served as both a consumer product, which was being purchased and read by locals and tourists alike, and a critical reflection of the time.

Our photograph is a reconstruction of a scene in *Heidi*. Klara, Heidi’s friend, is brought from the wealthy Sesemann household in Frankfurt to the Swiss Alps, sitting in her plush, modern wheelchair. The visual contrast of Klara’s chair upon Heidi’s mountain home inspired us to recreate a similar scene, this time by photographing an office chair in the Peak District.

Sarah Muller
School of Languages and Cultures (Germanic Studies)
My research explores the experiences of primary school students in Luxembourg, going through a multilingual education system whose rigid nature can constitute an educational obstacle. Indeed, the Luxembourgish education system can be described as having two faces: on one hand, it is often portrayed as a model multilingual education system in the European context. On the other hand, studies have shown that it contributes to the reproduction of social stratification and that it generally disadvantages students with a foreign and/or low socio-economic background.

The language regime in primary schools is based on the three officially recognised languages: German functions as the language of instruction and to teach basic literacy; French is taught as a 'foreign' language from year two onwards; and Luxembourgish occupies little curriculum time but is used extensively by teachers and students alike. This highly specific language regime favours students with a Germanic-language (i.e. Luxembourgish) background, which is problematic given that over 60% of primary school students have a dominant home language other than Luxembourgish. In fact, a large number of these students grow up in Romance-language home environments, and these numbers have been steadily growing. This mirrors wider socio-demographic changes in Luxembourg where, as a result of continuous immigration over the last decades, the resident population is currently made up of 48% foreigners.

Not limited to Luxembourg, it is an international phenomenon that student populations are diversifying in terms of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, within educational policy research, it is important to give a voice to students who, based on the divergence of their linguistic repertoire from the official curriculum, may be facing educational disadvantages or exclusion.

I spent 12 weeks in a primary school in Luxembourg where I conducted ethnographic observations during lessons and conducted in-depth interviews with students to explore their experiences with, and opinions on, the language regime, language policies, and their linguistic repertoires more generally.

School uniforms are an important cultural element in the UK and immediately recognisable as such, however, they don’t exist in Luxembourg or many other European contexts. Thus, it was important for the jumper to have a visible school crest, as this facilitates its recognition as a school uniform for a European audience. As such, the photograph can work in both a UK and a European context. The text on the label is meant to engage the viewer critically: One Size Fits All? Surely school uniforms need to be sold in varying sizes in order to be a good fit for students? This serves as a metaphor for the many education systems around the world which are based on ‘One Size Fits All’ models, and which, as a result, can invisibilise many students’ individuals resources, skills and needs. Unless organised in a flexible way that can adapt to its students, multilingual education systems can be just as exclusive as monolingual ones.
Caitlin Nagle
Department of Archaeology
Staring out to sea from the top of Bird’s Rock, it is easy to see why local folklore claims the sea once reached the base of the cliff. The Dysynni Valley is a wide, low-lying coastal valley typical of the west coast of Wales. The steep sides and flat valley bottom were carved out by glaciers during the last ice age. During the eighteenth century, the valley was drained, completely changing the landscape. The river Dysynni once meandered across the valley floor, but it has since been straightened: traces of its former channels can almost be seen as darker lines. The valley we see today has been entirely changed by human management, and it is difficult to know what the valley would have looked like in the past.

There are many clues that sea-level once reached further inland. The fields in the valley bottom are large and rectangular, which contrasts with the small, irregular, piecemeal enclosure found in the uplands. This suggests that the valley bottom was enclosed much later. Tracing patterns left by the old river channels hints at a marsh environment, rather than typical river meanders. Several places in the valley are named “Glan-y-morfa” which translates to “coastal marsh”. And the locals will tell you that sea-birds nest on Bird’s Rock, which is seen as proof the sea came much closer in previous generations.

There is a rich history in the valley, with evidence of occupation from prehistory through to the present day. There are many prehistoric finds from the Mesolithic and Bronze Age, and a Roman road from Cefn Gaer to Pennal traverses the uplands.

Moreover, my data will contribute to models of future climate change and the impact it will have on vulnerable, coastal communities.
Emma Nagouse
School of English (SIIBS)
Emma: For a while I thought this image might be a blank space. I had little idea of how to approach creating this image in a responsible way. I wanted to centralise the standpoint and experience of those who have experienced violence and abuse, but did not want an image which appeared to be objectifying or voyeuristic.

To avoid this, I thought about photographing an object which may offer insight into my research, something which represented the devastating statistics related to sexual violence, perhaps? Or maybe a thong – a nod to a rape trial in the Republic of Ireland last year where a woman’s underwear was used as evidence of consent. But then, I did not want to dehumanise rape culture.

I thought, for a while, I should focus on an image around the perpetrator, but I did not want to take away from who should be at the centre of these conversations. All of these factors felt very difficult to reconcile. Andy was a sensitive collaborator and read widely around my research which was helpful for our long conversations (and longer email threads) about this project.

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The final concept of “Fragments” was inspired by images I saw of prisoners on death row who used mirrors to see out of their prison cells. It is also a nod to the biblical side of my research. One of my most influential pieces of feminist biblical research is Fragmented Women by Cheryl Exum. Exum explains that we only get glimpses of women in the Hebrew Bible, even in stories which should be about them (such as the rapes of Dinah, Tamar, Bathsheba). It is our job as readers to stitch these fragments together.

The broken mirror also references how the mirror is often used in Renaissance paintings of rape – as a symbol of vanity or promiscuity. A tool for victim blame. Here, Nadia uses the mirror to be the one who looks, as well as being looked at. She disrupts.

The final image, shaped by Andy’s caution about overstepping the boundaries of his knowledge and my research examining the ways in which rape narratives are discussed and depicted became more about avoiding things rather than choosing them. Coming face-to-face with creating my own image with Andy, will, I believe, be a hugely influential experience when bringing critical analysis to bear on other pieces of visual culture in my thesis.

Andy: From an early stage of learning about Emma’s PhD, I became conscious that I was, to a large extent ignorant of all of the overlapping themes and research areas – the Hebrew Bible, cultural theory, research around rape myths and narratives, and feminist theory. Whilst I am often unfamiliar with research topics during The Image Speaks, in this case I felt particularly important to try and navigate this respectfully. I did not want to be a middle class white man asserting leadership outside the areas of my knowledge. I am often unfamiliar with research topics during The Image Speaks, in this case I felt particularly important to try and navigate this respectfully. I did not want to be a middle class white man asserting leadership outside the areas of my knowledge.

The final idea – of fragments and reflections – came from Emma. The challenges for me, then, were largely technical and concerned logistics, composition and lighting. Ultimate decisions about posing, lighting, and choice of final image were reached together.

Emma: We see only fragments of people (their gender, their race, their class) and we use this fragmented information to inform what we believe about a rape. This way of thinking about rape and about people more generally is reflected back to us in the stories we consume in film, art, and television, but also in news reports. Our image invites us to trouble and disrupt these prejudices which cause so much harm to so many, but particularly the most marginalised among us.
“We now have the promise of a stuffed crow. Going to attempt to contact the nuclear AMRC tomorrow...”

Apart from possibly being the best opening line to any email in the history of emails, Andy’s message was also excellent news. Having discussed my project, we had hit upon the perfect framing for the photograph early on: put a stuffed crow in a nuclear research facility. As it turned out, accessing both of these was easier than expected. Museums Sheffield had a stuffed crow on hand we could borrow for a day, and it transpired that our contact at the Nuclear AMRC in Rotherham was an admirer of Ted Hughes’ work (indeed, his final undergraduate astrophysics examination had included one of the poems from Hughes’ Crow collection (1971) and prompted the aspiring physicists to “Discuss”). So, one bright Wednesday morning we threaded our way through the lathes and lasers bearing our cameras, tripods, and a stuffed crow in a Perspex box. This was much to the amusement of the scientists and engineers who very kindly let us stand a very deceased corvid in their very shiny workstations.

Crow’s presence amid the rigid horizontal and vertical lines of the lab is disruptive and chaotic in much the same way as twentieth century advancements in quantum physics disrupted and undermined the Newtonian model of classical physics, which forms the foundation of Western science. In classical physics, matter behaves in a predictable way according to universal calculable laws; in the world of quantum physics, particles cease to behave rationally. Ted Hughes drew upon this disobedient nature of quantum physics in his creation of Crow, a trickster figure who bridges the rational conscious mind of the scientist and the creative imagination of the poet.

My thesis argues that in response to the nuclear events of the mid-twentieth century, poets sought for ways to subvert the destructive potential of the rationalistic Newtonian mentality. I argue that poets like Hughes perceived a crossover between quantum physics and the archetypal characteristics of tricksters; the trickster trait of boundlessness/boundary crossing, for instance, speaks to the possibility in quantum physics for particles to exist in two places at once. In doing so, quantum tricksters became agents of subversion, and were a way for poets to stimulate a change in the post-nuclear global consciousness. Balancing Western scientific rationality with subjectivity and imagination could potentially lead to more harmonious ways of living, both with each other and with the natural world, as well as seek to prevent an apocalyptic thermonuclear future.
Martina Rosola
Department of Philosophy
Taking metaphors seriously. This is how we looked for a photo that represented my research. First of all, I isolated the central themes of my work.

My topic is generics, namely sentences that express generalisations over a kind without employing quantifiers. Despite the apparently complicated definition, they are easy sentences that we use every day, like “birds fly”. Stereotypes are often expressed through generic sentences: “British are polite”, “Italians are poets”, “Arabs are good at maths”...

What I find interesting in these sentences is their ability to essentialise, namely to lead one to believe that the members of a kind share a common nature, an essence. That is, reading or hearing “Italians are poets” leads you to believe that Italians are unified by an underlying nature, which their properties depend on. Thus, they are poets because of their essence. Being a poet is a positive property, so there seems to be nothing problematic in this. However, believing that Italians share a common nature makes us more likely to accept negative stereotypes, like “Italians are mobsters”. Indeed, if we believe that Italians share a common nature, we tend to trace the property of individuals back to their essence. Thus, upon knowing that a few Italians are mobsters, we conclude that this depends on their nature. Since this nature is shared by all Italians, we then generalise the property of being mobsters to the entire group, concluding that Italians are mobsters. This is harmful and dangerous. Such stereotypes are the basis of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

More broadly, I’m fascinated by language in general, and in particular by its elusive aspects. I’m interested in those phenomena that give you a fishy feeling which is difficult to track down to anything in particular. What I aim to do is figure out what triggers that feeling.

Generics are one of those phenomena. The way they essentialise kinds is sneaky, and often neither the speaker nor the addressee realise what’s going on. The conclusion that, say, Italians have a common essence might not be evident to the speakers, but it can influence their beliefs and behaviour nonetheless. Hence, they cause harm, but usually in an involuntary and unconscious way; collateral damage.

In my research, I try to figure out what enables generics to lead people believing in essences of social kinds. It is not their explicit meaning. Rather, it is something they communicate implicitly. It is precisely the implicit nature of the mechanism at work that makes it difficult to recognize what’s going on.

Thus, in choosing the subject for the photo, we looked for something that could represent collateral damage, an implicit meaning, or essentialisation. We relied on sayings that encode metaphors, focusing on the image they are built upon. We went for “there’s no smoke without fire”, that gives the idea of essentialisation and is often used as an excuse for racist behaviours. We then took a picture of smoke to evoke this saying.
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 9 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’re grateful for the generosity of the following colleagues and associates, who responded to a range of odd email requests with humour and goodwill. Graham Moore and Anita Hamlin at Museums Sheffield, Tim Chapman and Ross Barrable at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, Michelle Marshall and Tim Chico from the University’s Medical School, Kath Harding from Estates and Facilities Management and Nadia Medhi, PhD student in the Department of Philosophy.

Without you, these photos would not have been possible. Thanks also to Julia Whalley and Reuben Brown from design studio Cafeteria. Their relaxed approach and terrific design skills are responsible for the exhibition’s professional look. We also acknowledge the support of Arts and Humanities Knowledge Exchange funding provided by the Higher Education Innovation Fund, without which this exhibition would not happen.

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,
March 2019
The Image Speaks

An exhibition of photography of PhD research by Andy Brown

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