White Rose Research Online
eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk
Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York

Deposited via The University of Leeds.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/141424/

Version: Accepted Version

Book Section:
Savani, G and Thompson, V (2019) Ambiguity and omission: creative mediation of the unknowable past. In: van Helden, D and Witcher, R, (eds.) Researching the Archaeological Past through Imagined Narratives: A Necessary Fiction. Routledge, London, UK, pp. 210-237. ISBN: 9781138303638.

https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203730904

© 2020 the Author(s). This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge inResearching the Archaeological Past through Imagined Narratives: A Necessary Fiction on December 13, 2019, available online: http://www.routledge.com/9781138303638

Reuse
Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
University of Sheffield
UNIVERSITY of York

10 Ambiguity and omission: creative mediation of the unknowable past

Giacomo Savani & Victoria Thompson

Abstract

The nexus between archaeology and imagination has received significant attention in the last two decades. Definitions of 'archaeological imagination' range from a 'way of being attuned to the world' (Thomas 1999, 63) and, therefore, able to 'read' the past as a hunter 'reads' the tracks of a prey, to 'a creative impulse and faculty at the heart of archaeology' (Shanks 2012, 25). Collaboration between artists (mostly visual artists) and archaeologists has a long and established tradition, but an understandable concern for the risks of an 'imaginative' archaeology has prevented full exploration of the possible overlap of these two roles. This paper investigates whether imagination and art have a positive impact on archaeological research, building up from the collaborative experience of two scholars who are also creative artists. Through a project that combines creative writing, graphic art, material culture and landscape and incorporates both creative work and reflective practice, the authors address the multifaceted challenges of representing and interpreting the past in and outside an academic context.

Introduction (GS)

In a short essay on the difficulties of reconstructing dialogue in historical novels, Marguerite Yourcenar (1992) revealed her meticulous efforts to engage with the subtleties of language and tone. One particularly fruitful exercise involved translating a short passage of her own *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1955) into ancient Greek, the language in which that emperor would have been most likely to think and write. The result showed that "eight words refused to be written in Greek" (Yourcenar 1992: 36). Yet, the author decided to keep those words, claiming that their "impression, if not the expression, seems authentic to me" (*ibid*.: 36). A balanced mixture of authenticity and inventiveness is crucial in (re)constructing all sorts of narratives of the past, in both written and visual works. In this chapter, we discuss the entangled

threads that link archaeological and artistic attempts to decipher the stuff of which the past is made, building up from the collaborative experience of two scholars who are also creative artists.

The idea of combining visual art (GS) and narrative (VT) to investigate the past originated from our desire to explore the creative and scholarly possibilities of collaboration. The second author thus wrote a vignette set in North-East England during the first half of the tenth century AD, revolving around an encounter between a master mason named Myredah and a boy, Gaut Bjornson, who craves to become his apprentice (Appendix 1). After together discussing the structure and 'flavour' of the story, the first author illustrated it with a series of acrylic paintings (Figures 1–7).

The first part of the chapter reviews recent work on the meaning of archaeological imagination, highlighting the potential of paratactic approaches to the past. The two following sections describe the creative process behind our contributions, offering insights into the difficulties and idiosyncrasies of each of our arts. We then contextualise our work within a broader frame of archaeological narratives and illustrations, investigating the impact that imagination and art might have on archaeological research and addressing the multifaceted challenges of representing and interpreting the past within and outside an academic context.

Theoretical frame (GS)

The nexus between archaeology and imagination has received significant attention over the last two decades (e.g. Jameson *et al*. 2003; Sanders 2009; Van Dyke & Bernbeck 2015a); its implications beyond the discipline also have been explored (e.g. Finn 2004; Schwyzer 2007). Definitions of 'archaeological imagination' range from a "way of being attuned to the world" (Thomas 1999: 63) and, therefore, able to 'read' the past as a hunter 'reads' the tracks of a prey, to a potential expression of creativity that "responds to what is missing rather than to what is there" (Wallace 2004: 24). Shanks (2012: 25) has recently stressed how imagination is precisely what allows the archaeologist "[t]o recreate the world behind the ruin in the land, to reanimate the people behind the sherd of antique pottery, a fragment of the past", and how this "is rooted in a sensibility, a pervasive set of attitudes towards traces and remains, towards memory, time and temporality, the fabric of history". The importance of this sensibility, Shanks (2012: 26–37) argues, is enhanced by the sense of insecurity and need to belong that permeates modern societies. Archaeological imagination thus conceptualised frequently becomes a propellant for cultural revivals and restorations with sometimes controversial results.

While a focus on the partial overlap between cultural memory and archaeological imagination is certainly productive, this approach can lead to neglect of the role played by individual creative acts and their relationship with archaeology as a discipline. Shanks, in collaboration with Mike Pearson, has

experimented with creative imagination in the volume *Theatre/Archaeology* (2001) and the results add much nuance to his theoretical discourse. In the introduction, they draw a parallel between archaeological interpretation and the performative interpretation of a dramatic work: both involve "an *active apprehension*—making a past work a present presence" (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 11, original emphasis). In particular, they relate the ideas of 'assembling' and 'staging' the past to the notion of hypotaxis (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 62–4). Hypotaxis is a grammatical term indicating a subordinate construction and its Greek etymology (ὑπο- 'beneath' and -ταξις < τάσσειν 'to place') suggests some form of subordination or unequal role between the clauses of a sentence. Surprisingly, Pearson and Shanks use this term to identify a non-hierarchical approach to a site report, with documents of different natures (e.g. texts, images, musical notations) contributing collectively to create a more nuanced picture. In a previous section, the authors claim that 'hypotaxis' has 'implications of simultaneity' in contrast with the 'implications of sequentiality' associated with 'parataxis' (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 25) and this detail might explain their lexical choice. To avoid confusion, however, here we describe as 'paratactic' the scenario outlined by Pearson and Shanks where 'investigators' with different backgrounds can equally contribute to (re)construction of the past according to their expertise, skills and inclinations.

To a certain extent, this paratactic approach already exists (Evans 1993: 441; Lesure 2015: 65). Site reports, for example, are the result of the collaborative effort of several specialists. Among these are archaeological illustrators and collaboration between (mostly visual) artists and archaeologists has a long tradition (e.g. Barkan 1999; Lurin & Burlot 2017; Smiles 2007; Savani forthcoming). In specific historical contexts, such as seventeenth-century Rome, the role of artists had become so prevalent that the past could be seen only through the lens of their imagination (Tschudi 2017). Similar precedents and the resulting concern for the risks of an 'imaginative' archaeology have led many scholars to discourage any artistically creative interference (James 1997: 23; Bernbeck 2015: 258). Alan Sorrell (1981: 21), one of the most influential archaeological artists of the last century, captures this tension: "I think we have to decide whether archaeology (and, with it, archaeological reconstruction) is linked with what we know as humanistic culture, or is merely a technological offshoot".

Pearson and Shanks' non-hierarchical approach offers a compromise that might help to reconcile the discipline's two souls. In their model, creativity is not a threat to scientificity because these work on parallel planes—they are not competing to reveal an elusive 'historical truth' (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 63; Wickham-Jones, this volume). Rather, they provide very different tools to engage with the same, fragmented picture of the past (see Kavanagh and Gibb, this volume). The following section evaluate the implications of this assumption, building up from our experience of reconstructing the past within and outside academia.

Writing the past (VT)

Over the last generation, narrative has moved centre stage within archaeology, both in terms of interpretation and of hermeneutic:

> "Narrative is a means of understanding and describing the world in relation to agency… linking locales, landscape, actions, events and experiences together providing a synthesis of heterogeneous phenomena. In its simplest form it involves a story and a story-teller" (Tilley 1994: 32).

Narrative foregrounds the contingent and embedded nature of knowledge, highlighting the ambiguities and omissions of our title. Gaps and uncertainties are often seen as problems to be solved, but our argument here is that they are not only inevitable, but a rich and exploitable resource (see Sorrell 1981: 25). Discovering stories in our material leads to the opposite of the traditional arc of academic writing in which a case is made, alternative hypotheses are disproved and a conclusion is drawn. Narrative rejects conclusions and opens the door to multiple interpretations and possibilities.

I first began writing narrative fiction explicitly as a research methodology, albeit in playful mode. A specific line of enquiry in my project on the materiality and monumentality of burial in later Anglo-Saxon England had run into the sand for lack of evidence. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Cubbin 1996; O'Keeffe 2001), the bones of St Oswald had been transferred from Bardney (Lincolnshire) to Gloucester some 30 years after Lincolnshire had come under Scandinavian rule, but there was no evidence for what the Bardney shrine had looked like, how the relics had survived (if indeed they were the real bones), or who was responsible for the translation. Each of the two manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that mentions the translation (in a single, brief sentence) files the event under a different year (905 and 909). I began filling in the gaps, playing with different, equally plausible scenarios. Very rapidly, my micro-narratives started falling into archetypal story patterns. The bones are treasure, the object of a quest; like the standard in Rosemary Sutcliff's (1954) The *Eagle of the Ninth*, inspired by a find from Silchester. The bones are also a touchstone for individual and cultural complexity. Fictional narrative has an in-built capacity for the articulation of a variety of conflicting and contradictory perspectives; it allows the reader to hold many possibilities in mind at once, rather than being forced to choose between them. It can also be used to highlight and exploit—rather than seek to resolve—irreconcilable problems within the data. The traditional academic voice is univocal, and usually passive. Fiction, in contrast, allows the multivocality of that complex past to assert itself.

The process of writing *The Bone Thief* (Whitworth 2012) and my next two novels, *The Traitors' Pit* (2013) and *The Daughter of the Wolf* (2016), made me look critically at the concept of historical fiction. This was not, it seemed to me, an accurate term for what I was doing, other than in the broadest terms.

There are various ways of interrogating the past: historians, art historians, numismatists, archaeologists and literature scholars have different (if overlapping) theories, methodologies and datasets. Historical novelists often do exactly what archaeologists accuse historians of doing: writing the past from documents and using material culture as illustration. But in an age of actor-network theory, object biography and entanglement, this feels inadequate. I am helped by working on a period in which the historical record is sparse in the case of my first two books; for my third, set in Northumbria in AD 858–9, it is practically non-existent. Here, landscape and artefact become agents: the reconstructed hinterland of the ninth-century Humber Estuary and a range of artefacts, most especially a set of silver strap ends based on those from Poppleton, North Yorkshire (Thomas 2006). They are active participants in the narrative, constructing and constraining the characters' choices. The plot has a frame narrative, a chronicle penned by one of the characters, which I use as a device to highlight the contingent, fragmentary and fugitive nature of the written record—including that of my own novel. In my current project (*Other Gods*, forthcoming 2018), I have chosen a period in the early tenth century for which the historical record is slightly more robust, but by focusing on materiality, landscape and female experience, I unpick and comment on the elite, masculine and military documentary and textual narrative.

Whereas historical fiction has a sizeable historiography and theory of its own, archaeological fiction has been much less theorised. The approach sketched above, however, opens the door to narrative centred on object-oriented analyses, employing phenomenology and an awareness that people iteratively constitute and are constituted by their material environment. Archaeology lends itself to the delusion of a godlike omniscience (see Bernbeck 2015: 259), a delusion fostered by the conventions of much archaeological illustration. This omniscience is echoed in my first three novels, all of which are written from a third-person perspective. In *Other Gods*, in contrast, I write in the first person, forcing me to think critically about the ways in which self and identity were constructed, both materially and socially, and the different degrees of agency possible. The experiment of filtering one's own consciousness—however partially and inaccurately—through that of another demands that the writer become hyper-aware of agency and intentionality in the material record (see also van Helden & Witcher, this volume). As the characters move and interact I find myself asking what kind of archaeological footprints they are leaving behind, as well as speculating on their own attitudes to and interactions with the monuments of the past.

The vignette written for this paper (Appendix 1) takes its inspiration from two extraordinary pieces of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture (York, Newgate 1 and Nunburnholme 1a, Lang; Figure 8), about which I have also written academically. Both pieces are carved from limestone from Tadcaster, originally brought to Roman York as ashlar; re-used in the first half of the tenth century as part of an upright cross-shaft; and re-used again in the later middle ages as building stone. Newgate 1 is of exceptional interest, in part

because the same master craftsman can be identified at work on two other fragments (York Clifford St. 1 and York Coppergate 2).

On each flat face of Newgate 1 is a decorative or figurative motif, contained within an arched border. Newgate 1 is distinguished by its unusual use of space and shape: whereas the convention with these cross-shafts is for the ornament to respect the field on which it is carved, on Newgate 1 the artist has filled the empty space above the arches with angels whose faces are positioned on the corners between the sides and whose arms and wings spread behind them. The cross-shaft thus demands that it be viewed corner-on as well as face-on. The damaged cross-shaft—now at Nunburnholme in East Yorkshire, but probably originally from York—provides the only parallel in early medieval sculpture; and Newgate 1 is almost certainly originally dependent on Nunburnholme as, despite his impressive competence, the Newgate sculptor has misunderstood the way the Nunburnholme sculptor has designed the angels' wings. While there are some analogies in other media further afield (such as the four angels upholding a roundel of Christ in the ceiling mosaic in the San Zeno chapel of the Church of Santa Prassede in Rome, 817–24), they are remote enough to suggest that the Nunburnholme sculptor was innovating. The relationship between the two cross-shafts thus intrigues.

Newgate 1 is also interesting in terms of technique: the portrait of Christ, and the chains of beasts and birds, that adorn the other faces are confident and deeply-modelled, but much of the angel ornament is shallowly incised, and the modelled wings and hands do not have the assurance of the decoration within the arches. The angels' heads are particularly clumsy in comparison with that of Christ. This suggests that the latter may have had a model, but the former are an experiment. Newgate 1 is also of outstanding interest because the marks of different tools—chisels and gouges—are still visible, the top has a hole and the remains of molten lead to hold the fixing pin for an upper component, and there are traces of red pigment. Engaging closely with the materiality of Newgate 1 thus draws the viewer into an unparalleled closeness with the world of the early medieval stone carver.

Visualising the past (GS)

Words can be evocative, suggestive, elusive, deceitful even. To a certain extent, writers can decide how much information they are willing to provide the reader of the narrative at any given moment. In contrast, illustrations tend to force artists to fix visually only one of the many possibilities implicit in the text; through the artists' eyes a gesture, a face, a landscape become a specific gesture, a recognisable face, a finite landscape. And what applies to the artist also applies to the theatrical script or screenplay of a novel. Usually, after the features of a character have been 'revealed', artists are able to modify only minor details; significant changes would require specific justification in the narrative.

This visual ‘fixing’ is a powerful and controversial process. Charles Dickens was so aware of the impact on the reader of the illustrations for his books that he personally supervised their creation (Cohen 1980: 5). The conditioning effects of images on the reader of a text are summarised in the *Vita di Alberto Pisani*, by Carlo Dossi (1870: 4), where the author explains the aversion of his main character, Alberto, for illustrated books:

> “According to him, illustrators were the sort of people that wanted to impose themselves on imagination; uncalled for, they intruded on where he wanted to be alone, face-to-face with his author” (Translated by GS).

Starting work on the illustrations for Victoria’s story, I was therefore aware of the consequences that my visual reinterpretation might have on the original text. During our preliminary meetings, we had many opportunities to discuss the theory underpinning our collaboration; the moment I outlined a sketch of the first plate I was alone. The responsibility to give texture, colour and light to faces, gestures and feelings fell entirely on me. Was the light in this landscape what Victoria had imagined? Were the hands of this boy anywhere near to those she had in mind while writing of him fumbling with the knots of his pouch?

The search for a balanced and fruitful exchange between text and images was complicated further by the historical setting. Moreover, what I was going to depict was not a generic version of the past, it was the past Victoria had recreated. Her imagination was the prism through which I was to see the light and colours of a particular moment in time. Finally, both of us are archaeologists, adding an extra layer to this already complex picture. Was historical accuracy more important than empathy? Was the ‘impression’ more important than the ‘expression’, to use Yourcenar’s (1992: 36) words? To what extent did I want the archaeologist to lead the artist or vice versa? Indeed, was there any real difference between these two roles? Below I reconstruct the creative process behind some of the artistic choices I made and evaluate them in light of theoretical considerations.

Figure 1 illustrates the start of the story and sets the mood for the entire project. Victoria’s narrative begins, *ex abrupto*, in the dusty yard of the master mason’s workshop. I felt the need to create a frame, a way to guide the reader into this past and chose to open with two long shots. Inspiration came from the work of the photographer George Davison (1854–1930; Coe 1989). His historical landscapes captured the British countryside at a time more similar to the Anglo-Saxon period than that of today. In particular, two atmospheric photogravures captured my imagination: *Landscape* (*c*. 1910) and *An Old Farmstead* (also known as *The Onion Field*, 1890). The first shows an impressionistic landscape, dominated by a large, black tree. I decided to keep the composition and to work on the light and the chromatic palette. Colours, light and narrative are interconnected. In this case, my choice of a pale light and unnatural blue and purple tones was intended to evoke the foreign texture of the past (Lowenthal 1985). In *An Old Farmstead*, we see an onion field in the foreground and a group of buildings surrounded by a wood in the background. I

superimposed my painting directly on to the original image, transforming the structures in the background into an Anglo-Saxon village and changing the atmosphere from bucolic to ominous.

Another crucial element for my rendition was the choice of the protagonist Gaut Bjornson's face (Figures 3 and 4). Victoria never gives a physical description, only hinting at his leanness in two comments by Master Myredah. The process of 'finding' his face took a long time. In an early version, he had high cheekbones and ash-blond hair but something in his sharp-cornered features did not satisfy me. After a series of unsuccessful attempts, I tried to work his face from multiple layers of paint, just like Gaut would have carved his way through a piece of wood. I intentionally left his lineaments slightly undefined, with the exception of his eyes where I hid a purple glare of determination. Above, I have mentioned the typical immutability of a character's physiognomy in book illustrations. Going partially against this, in Figure 4 I altered Gaut's face, enlarging his eyes in the frame where he looks at one of his carved pieces in Myredah's hand. The main reason for this was to express better the interior struggle of the boy while his art was weighed and judged by the master mason. At the same time, it was a subtle remark upon the elusive nature of the past—Gaut's features are mutable and cannot be grasped in their entirety, just like the past itself.

Finally, in Figure 5 (frame 1), the most archaeological of my paintings, we see the interior of Master Myredah's workshop. The first version looked very much like a standard reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon building, so I decided to discard it and to build a new one using only volumes and light. The new rendition was still architecturally accurate, but more evocative. My intent was to emphasise the sharp contrast between the bright light outside and the 'stuffy and thick with dust' atmosphere of the interior, to which Gaut had to accustom his eyes. Light plays a major role also in the first frame of the following plate (Figure 6), where it is charged with an almost narrative function: the brightness coming from the stone seems to guide and irresistibly attract Gaut's hand, like a beacon in the dark.

Imagining the past (GS)

One of the main themes emerging from our accounts is that every attempt to engage with the past and to transform this distant, indefinite entity into narrative, requires both knowledge and imagination. The challenges faced by artists and archaeologists are very much alike: to decipher the faint tracks of foreign people and landscapes before re-elaborating them into a story (Perry & Johnson 2014: 348–9). The difference lies in the approach towards gaps and uncertainties in the evidence. At the two extremes, we find the dry prose of excavation reports and the creative freedom of fantasy books; yet, more complex questions arise when we decide to explore the grey areas between: how far can archaeologists use their

imagination to fill the gaps? How deep down the archaeological rabbit hole can the artist go before creativity is constrained? Can a hybrid approach be useful to academic discourse?

In a brief passage about her decision to stop writing historical novels for children, Joyce Gard (the pseudonym of Joyce Reeves, 1911–1993), author of three delicate books set in Roman Britain (Gard 1963, 1964, 1969), pinpointed the struggle to find a balance between creativity and accuracy (reported in Chevalier & Kirkpatrick 1990: 372):

> "That vein ran out after I went to the Orkneys and Shetlands some years ago looking for a children's book and became so severely infected with the archaeological virus that the resulting book was unpublishable even after two rewritings".

The 'archaeological virus' is indeed a dangerous pathogen. My first attempt to reconstruct Master Myredah's workshop showcased all its symptoms: meticulously detailed and utterly inexpressive. Similar results are seen in many 'aseptic' reconstructions of the past such as architectural drawings and cutaways, where any human element is either decorative or for scale (see Sorrell 1981: 21). In line with their scientific purpose, these illustrations offer no narrative (James 1997: 23).

In a few cases, however, archaeological illustrators have attempted 'atmospheric' reconstructions, where the human element plays a more significant role. The paintings of Alan Sorrell demonstrate how evocative the latter can be (Perry & Johnson 2013, 2014; Sorrell 1981; Sorrell & Sorrell 2018). His stormy and smoky ancient landscapes are a unique combination of "scientific rigour and Romantic sensibilit[y]" and embody "the inner tensions that all of us who call ourselves archaeologists regularly confront: balancing the art of imaginative interpretation with the demands of meticulous field practice" (Perry & Johnson 2013: 153). While in his famous aerial views of townscapes the human is mediated by the emotional charge of the weather (Sorrell 1981: 25), narrative plays a central role in his scenes of daily life. Among these, *The Son of Dervacus Inspects his Father's Monument* (1940) stands out for its vibrant intensity. In the misty light of a stormy dawn during the sixth century AD, we see a group of people surrounding an inscribed stone dedicated to Dervacus, son of Iustus (the so-called Maen Madoc, Ystradfellte, Powys). As noted by Redknap (2002: 15), "Sorrell's picture draws upon the imagination", stimulating the viewers to interrogate themselves about the past, present, and future of these characters: "[t]he figures do not just provide scale–they are actors in a drama, and engaged in a visit to the memorial".

Another powerful example of 'atmospheric' reconstructions is the cover image created by Thomas A. Goskar for Volume 1 of report on the High Speed 1 excavations at Springhead and Northfleet, Kent (Andrews *et al*. 2011) (Figure 9). It shows a river flowing in a rural landscape bathed in moonlight. A colonnaded structure on the left and a Romano-British temple on the right are illuminated by oil lamps.

Even if the landscape is devoid of people, the warm light of the lamps and the peculiar viewpoint hint at a human presence. The viewers are projected on a boat approaching the sanctuary, a heartening vision for the pilgrims that have finally reached their destination. These implicit layers of narrative, traceable in both Sorrell's and Goskar's works, are effective in recreating the physicality of specific moments in time, moments that appear as the sum of the individual stories that constitute the past.

In the following passage from *The Eagle of the Ninth*, Sutcliff (1954: 6) describes the Romano-British town of *Isca Dumnoniorum* (Exeter) and its impression on the protagonist, centurion Marcus Flavius Aquila:

> "Dogs sat scratching in odd corners, lean pigs rooted among the garbage piles, and women with bracelets of gold or copper on very white arms sat in hut doorways, spinning or grinding corn. The blue smoke of many cooking-fires curled up into the quiet air, and the savoury smell of many evening meals mingled with the blue reek of wood-smoke and the sharper tang of horse-dropping, which Marcus had by now come to associate with all British towns".

Once again, the past is filtered through the experience of a specific individual. Furthermore, the third-person perspective reminds us of two other filters embedded in Sutcliff's (and others') writing: the author's personal consciousness and the archaeological interpretation of specific sites (e.g. *Isca Dumnoniorum*) at specific moments in time (e.g. 1950s) (see Evans 1993: 421; Elphinstone, this volume).

Mutual influences between historical fiction and archaeology have a long and established tradition (e.g. Elphinstone & Wickham-Jones 2012; Evans 1993; Hales & Paul 2011; Sanders 2009: 102–11; Henson, this volume). In a forthcoming paper on the reception of the Anglo-Saxon past *c*. 1750–1850, Roey Sweet (pers. comm.) shows how scanty and vague antiquarian descriptions of Anglo-Saxon settlements were up to the mid-nineteenth century, when Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1848: 64–5) included a vivid portrayal of eleventh-century London in his *Harold, the Last of the Saxon Kings*. In this case, a fictional reconstruction, albeit based on archaeological and historical evidence, provided the first, synthetic impression of an Anglo-Saxon city. Bulwer-Lytton gave texture to blurry, evanescent moments in space and time, influencing scholars as much as he had been influenced by them (see Christensen 2004; Harrison 2011).

These considerations suggest the potential that narratives (both pictorial and textual) might have in an academic discourse. Reality is constantly filtered through the human element and the emotional perception cannot be excluded from our understanding of the past. If we think of a site or an archaeological object as a picture (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 42–3), the emotional and narrative elements would be a series of photographic filters that highlight details otherwise lost and confused. They address the eyes of the archaeologists, enriching with nuances their comprehension of the past.

The multiple layers of interpretation that gather around a site or an object bring us back to the idea of parataxis. The volume *From Rancho to Reservoir* (Ziesing 1997) offers a fascinating example of this method, many of the authors combining archaeological and creative narratives in their contributions. One of these, 'Elegant dining on California's cattle frontier' (Ziesing *et al*. 1997) is particularly effective. In the first part of the paper, the authors review information from historical documents and excavations regarding the dining practices of the mid nineteenth-century inhabitants of the Rancho Vasco Adobe (California). Next comes a section entitled 'Dinnertime, May 29, 1860: a fantasy', in which the authors reconstruct a mid-day dinner in the late spring of 1860. The evidence collected underpins a simple but captivating vignette of housework, food and business conversations, with "the bright, cheerful china" on the table "offset[ting] the dingy, smoke-stained walls" of the main room of the house (*ibid*.: 63). The catalogues of foodstuff and tableware found at the site are brought back to life and moulded into narrative, provoking an unexpected sense of participation. The distance between us and the people that owned and consumed these items is reduced, allowing the reader to smell for a moment "the scent of human flesh" (Bloch 1954: 26): an entanglement of troubles, playfulness, and obligations (see Sanders 2009: 66–7).

This process of humanising archaeology (Van Dyke & Bernbeck 2015b: 10) is not without its risks. Bernbeck (2015: 261) sees it as a form of disrespect:

> "we project political desires back in time, carrying out in the process an act of colonization. We deny past peoples the right to speak for themselves, simply because they are the ultimate Other, one who will never be able to talk back".

He claims that the Other we represent is nothing but a mirror of our Selves, an act of "diachronic violence" (*ibid.*: 262). Since the past remains foreign to us, he proposes as an alternative, inspired by the *nouveau roman*, fictionalising the past through incoherent subjects and narratives where meaningless objects are predominant. To test this, Bernbeck presents a vignette, built around the description of some pottery sherds, but his brief account remains imbued with the author's sensibility: the sherds are emotionally intertwined with the humans that made and used them, contradicting the premise that "there is no symbolism in material culture" (*ibid*.: 260).

Conclusions (GS)

The creative acts that lie behind narrative cannot be concealed; they are a mirror of the writer's self and of his or her time. Instead of de-humanising traditional narratives forms, we argue that we should acknowledge that the past is unknowable and accept the risks of creatively engaging with it. As long as the authors are explicit in their use of imagination and are clear with their audience about what is based

on facts, what has been integrated and the way this has been done, the scientific standards of the discipline are not jeopardised (Pollock 2015: 284–5). Furthermore, giving voices to past people does not necessarily mean appropriating their identities. Rather than a replication, archaeological narratives are a re-interpretation or re-enactment of the past (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 117–9). The characters of these re-enactments are therefore independent from the people that inspired them: they possess identities of their own, only partly shaped by the consciousness of their creators (see Gibb, this volume). Their fictional otherness produces a reverberation of the past, allowing us to engage with "the *recurrent*, *constant* and *typical* as echoing in us and intelligible through us" (Burckhardt 1943: 17; original emphasis).

In 1949, Rt Hon. Lord Harlech (President of the National Museum of Wales, 1937–1942) summarised the similarities between artists and archaeologists (quoted in Redknap 2002: 2) thus:

> "The archaeologist and historian are both scientists and artists. Their first aim is to seek objective truth and to debunk anything false, but they seek, as does the artist, to illumine the truth with imagination".

The past can be illuminated only by candlelight. We should never forget about the shadows that surround the few, shining fragments we painstakingly recover from the "wrecks still floating on the ocean of time" (Anonymous 1858: 5). These shadows demand different, hybrid eyes that can see through the elusive penumbra between truth and imagination.

References

Andrews, P., E. Biddulph, A. Hardy & R. Brown. 2011. *Settling the Ebbsfleet Valley. High Speed 1 excavations at Springhead and Northfleet, Kent. The Late Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, and Medieval landscape. Volume 1: the sites*. Salisbury: Oxford Wessex Archaeology.

Anheier, H. & Y.R. Isar (ed.) 2011. *Heritage, memory & identity*. (Cultures and Globalization 4). Los Angeles (CA): Sage.

Anonymous. 1858. Introduction. *Archaeologia Cantiana* 1: 5–22.

Barkan, L. 1999. *Unearthing the past: archaeology and aesthetics in the making of Renaissance culture*. New Haven (CN): Yale University Press.

Bernbeck, R. 2015. From imaginations of a peopled past to a recognition of past people. In: R.M. van Dyke & R. Bernbeck (ed.) *Subjects and narratives in archaeology*: 257–276. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

Bloch, M. 1954. *The historian's craft*. Translated by:J.E. Anderson. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Bulwer-Lytton, E. 1848. *Harold, the last of the Saxon Kings*. London: Bentley.

Burckhardt, J. 1943. *Reflections on history*. Translated by M.D. Hottinger. London: Allen & Unwin.

Chevalier, T. & D.L. Kirkpatrick (ed.) 1990. *Twentieth-century children's writers*. Third edition, London: St. James.

Christensen, A.C. (ed.) 2004. *The subverting vision of Bulwer Lytton: bicentenary reflections*. Cranbury (NJ): Associated University Presses.

Coe, B. 1989. George Davison: impressionist and anarchist. In: M. Weaver (ed.) *British photography in the nineteenth century: the Fine Art tradition*: 215–241. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, J. R. 1980. *Charles Dickens and his original illustrators*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Cubbin, G.P. (ed.) 1996. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a collaborative edition, volume 6: MS D*. Cambridge: Brewer.

Dossi, C. 1870. *Vita di Alberto Pisani*. Milano: Perelli.

Elphinstone, M. & C. Wickham-Jones. 2012. Archaeology and fiction. *Antiquity* 86: 532–537. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X0006292X

Evans, C. 1993. Digging with the pen: novel archaeologies and literary traditions. In C. Tilley (ed.) *Interpretative Archaeology*: 417–447. Providence (RI): Berg.

Finn, C. 2004. *Past poetic: archaeology in the poetry of W.B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney*. London: Duckworth.

Gard, J. 1963. *The Dragon of the Hill*. London: Gollancz.

Gard, J. 1964. *Talargain, The Seal's Whelp*. London: Gollancz.

Gard, J. 1969. *The Mermaid's Daughter*. London: Gollancz.

Hales, S. & J. Paul (ed.) 2011. *Pompeii in the public imagination from its rediscovery to today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, S. 2011. Bulwer Lytton's The Last Days of Pompeii: recreating the city. In: S. Hales & J. Paul (ed.) *Pompeii in the public imagination from its rediscovery to today*: 70–90. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

James, S. 1997. Drawing inferences: visual reconstructions in theory and practice. In: B.L. Molyneaux (ed.) *The cultural life of images: visual representations in archaeology*: 22–48. London: Routledge.

Jameson, J.H. Jr., C. Finn & J.E. Ehrenhard (ed.) 2003. *Ancient muses: archaeology and the arts*. Tuscaloosa & London: University of Alabama Press.

Lesure, R.G. 2015. Emplotment as epic in archaeological writing: the site monograph as narrative. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 48(2): 57–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/00293652.2015.1051580

Lowenthal, D. 1985. *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lurin, E. & D.M. Burlot (ed.) 2017. *L'artiste et l'antiquaire. L'étude de l'antique et son imaginaire à l'époque moderne*. Paris: Picard.

Moore, N. & Y. Whelan (ed.) 2006. *Heritage, memory and the politics of identity: new perspectives on the cultural landscape*. London: Routledge.

O'Keeffe, K. (ed.) 2001. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. a collaborative edition, volume 5: MS D*. Cambridge: Brewer.

Pearson, M & M. Shanks. 2001. *Theatre/Archaeology*. London: Routledge.

Perry, S. & M. Johnson. 2013. Alan Sorrell as reconstruction artist: making 'dry bone live'. In: S. Llewellyn & R. Sorrell (ed.) *Alan Sorrell—a life reconstructed*: 138–157. Bristol: Sansom.

Perry, S. & M. Johnson. 2014. Reconstruction art and disciplinary practice: Alan Sorrell and the negotiation of the archaeological record. *The Antiquaries Journal*, 94: 323–352. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003581514000249

Pollock, S. 2015. Wresting with truth: possibilities and peril in alternative narrative forms. In: R.M. Van Dyke & R. Bernbeck (ed.) *Subjects and narratives in archaeology*: 277–286. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

Redknap, M. 2002. *Re-creations: visualizing our past*. Cardiff: National Museum of Wales & Cadw.

Sanders, K. 2009. *Bodies in the bog and the archaeological imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Savani, G. forthcoming. An elusive legacy: the discovery of Roman baths in eighteenth-century Britain. *Britannia*, 50.

Schwyzer, P. 2007. *Archaeologies of English Renaissance literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shanks, M. 2012. *The archaeological imagination*. Walnut Creek (CA): Left Coast.

Smiles, S. 2007. The art of recording. In: D. Gaimster, S. McCarthy & B. Nurse (ed.) *Making history: antiquaries in Britain 1707–2007*: 122–141. London: Royal Academy of Arts.

Sorrell, A. 1981. *Reconstructing the past*. London: Batsford.

Sorrell, J. & M. Sorrell, M. 2018. *Alan Sorrell: the man who created Roman Britain*. Oxford: Oxbow.

Sutcliff, R. 1954. *The Eagle of the Ninth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tilley, C. 1994. *A phenomenology of landscape*. Oxford: Berg.

Thomas, G. 2006. Reflections on a 9th-century Northumbrian metalworking tradition: a silver hoard from Poppleton, North Yorkshire. *Medieval Archaeology*, 50: 143–164. https://doi.og/10.1179/174581706x124248

Thomas, J. 1999. *Time, culture and identity: an interpretative archaeology*. London & New York: Routledge.

Tschudi, V.P. 2017. *Baroque Antiquity: archaeological imagination in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Dyke, R.M. & R. Bernbeck (ed.) 2015a. *Subjects and narratives in archaeology*: Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

Van Dyke, R.M. & R. Bernbeck. 2015b. Alternative narratives and the ethics of representation: an introduction. In: R.M. Van Dyke & R. Bernbeck (ed.), *Subjects and narratives in archaeology*: 1–26. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

Wallace, J. 2004. *Digging the dirt: the archaeological imagination*. London: Duckworth.

Whitworth, V. 2012. *The Bone Thief*. London: Ebury.

Whitworth, V. 2013. *The Traitors' Pit*. London: Ebury.

Whitworth, V. 2016. *The Daughter of the Wolf*. London: Head of Zeus.

Whitworth, V. forthcoming. *Other Gods*. London: Head of Zeus.

Yourcenar, M. 1955. *Memoirs of Hadrian*. Translated by G. Frick. London: Secker & Warburg.

Yourcenar, M., 1992. Tone and language in the historical novel. In: M. Yourcenar. *That mighty sculptor, time*: 25–53, Trans. W. Kaiser, New York: Farrar, Straus &Giroux.

Ziesing, G.H. (ed.) 1997. Rancho to Reservoir: history and archaeology of the Los Vaqueros Watershed,California. (Los Vaqueros Project Final Report 6). Rohnert Park (CA): Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University Foundation.

Ziesing, G.H., B. Eastman,K. Hattersley-Drayton, M. Praetzellis, E. Solari & S.B. Stewart. 1997. Elegant dining on California's cattle frontier. In: G.H. Ziesing (ed.) Rancho to Reservoir: History and Archaeology of the Los Vaqueros Watershed, California: 61–64. (Los Vaqueros Project Final Report 6). Rohnert Park (CA): Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University Academic Foundation.

Appendix: The Master Mason

He hadn't known you could smell stone.

But the yard was thick with an acrid odour that jabbed at the roof of his mouth, the hollow spaces behind his nostrils. His eyes had begun watering almost as soon as he had ducked through the wicket gate, his father's hand hard on his shoulder.

Or was it just the dust, irksome as any smell, in his nose and throat? A fine, whitish crust lay over everything in sight, including the hair and face of the master mason, emerging now from under the thatched lean-to. His eyes were squinted almost shut. When he spoke, his mouth was a wet red hole in a plastery mask.

'This thy lad?'

'Já,' his father said. 'This is Gaut.'

He pushed him forward. Gaut hadn't expected it. He was still taking in the piles of unshaped stone, the neatly stacked tools, the roughed-out slab just visible in the darkness of the lean-to, where the sound of metal on stone went on chink-chink-chinking in the gloom. He stumbled, and nearly pitched forward onto the master's white-powdered bare feet, dazzling in the sunlight. The mason put out a hand, but the boy righted himself, just in time.

The mason's hand went on coming forward, regardless. Gaut's upper arm was pinched between a thumb and fingers that rivalled any blacksmith's.

The squinty eyes narrowed even further. 'Not much there.'

Gaut's father sounded apologetic. 'Bairn's barely thirteen.'

'Needs feeding,' the mason said. It sounded like a challenge.

Gaut's head lifted.

Gaut's father said nothing.

'You're no Jorvik man, by your voice.'

'Coll, herra.' Gaut's father was twisting his felt cap in his hands. 'From the Western Isles. But we've been in Jorvik for–'

‘Tha said he worked wood.’ Again that note of challenge.

‘Show him,’ his father hissed.

Gaut’s fingers went to the pouch that hung by knotted thongs from his belt. The knots were stiff, or perhaps his fingers were unwilling to reveal the contents to that inhuman gaze.

The mason was holding out his hand. Every digit was battered and misshapen, the nails ragged and bruise-blackened, and Gaut wondered how such crude instruments could be involved in the making of anything beautiful.

He was still fumbling with the knots. He had tied them far too tight, in his anxiety, before leaving the house.

The mason dropped his hand abruptly.

‘Nej, herra!’ His father sounded startled, pleading, almost frightened. Not a range of notes Gaut associated with that voice.

‘Did think I was sending thee and thy lad away?’ The mason rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand and yawned, huge and startling. ‘Come you both this way.’

There was a great stone trough lying on its side, a yard high and long as a man. The mason swept away dust and chippings with his sleeve.

‘Here.’ He gestured at the smooth, chiselled surface. ‘Set out thy bits of whittling. Let no man say Myredah failed to give anyone a fair hearing, even such a wisp of a lad as thee.’

Gaut was even more nervous now that he knew this troll-like man had the power to make his father whinny like a horse that smelt fire. He rubbed his palms on the coarse wadmal of his leggings and addressed himself again to the knots, digging his thumb-nail in deep.

They came free at last, and the lips of the bag parted.

It was heavy with wood and bone: it had banged against his thigh all the long walk up from their damp little bigging by the river to where the master mason held court under the shadow of the great kirk. He had tucked in all his treasures so proudly that morning, but now he was ashamed.

‘Set’em out, then.’

White sycamore. Golden oak. Any wood he could beg from the coopers and the lathe-men, to crouch over in a corner, poking away with the tip of his belt-knife until his eyes ached in the half-light coming from the fire. The shank-bones of the kine, scavenged from the broth-pot after the last shred of meat and marrow had been boiled away from them, and before his stepmother could lob them to the dog.

Half-a-dozen pieces he had thought fine enough to bring to show the master mason.

Now he cringed and flinched and could barely look on as the man lifted each one to tilt it this way and that, before setting it gently down.

‘Where gets thy patterns, lad?’

His father came rushing in.

‘The bairn means no offense, master. Has he trespassed? I’ll lam him, if he has–’, swinging round on Gaut with a frown and an upraised hand.

But the master was shaking his head. ‘Not so fast, goodman.’ He turned back to Gaut. ‘I’ll have thee answer me, Gaut.’

‘Where’ – the boy swallowed against that bitter dust – ‘where as I find’em.’ His voice was no more than a rasp.

‘Master,’ his father prompted in a hiss.

‘Master.’ There was more sound to his wind-pipe this time. He gulped hard again. ‘My mam’s old brooches. The kirk cross. I scrat the lines out on birk-bark first…’

‘And change them.’

It was not a question. The master mason’s tone was flat as a flood-plain.

Gaut looked nervously to his left but there was no comfort there: his father’s thin face was thundery.

He stared down at his half-a-dozen pieces of carved rubbish. He had been so proud… Why had he been so proud? He reached out a tentative hand and picked up the nearest. A piece of bone, maybe eight thumbs long. For this one, he had been inspired by the pattern on a saddle. He had held the man’s horse for a good half-an-hour by the kirkyard sun-marker – long enough for every detail of the decoration to be embedded in his memory – and he had been rewarded with a little ring of bronze, and time enough to feast his starveling gaze. The saddle had been made of wood, with a high bow, covered with fine red calf-leather, glued and polished and skimmed with gilt so that every incised line in the underlying wood was visible.

He had scuttled home, his head full of new whirls and whorls and linked patterns and lively twining beasts. He had roared through the tasks his stepmother had had waiting for him, and given her the little loop of bronze to sweeten her, and flung himself down on the pile of skins in the corner to dig those images into this smooth, brownish surface, only slightly marred by the cut-marks where his stepmother’s little cleaver had hacked the bone before cooking it.

It was, he had thought, his best.

Now he could only see where the pattern had slipped, where one beast’s eye was twice the size of the next, where he had gone over-and-over instead of over-and-under…

Master Myredah’s big, blunt hand took it away from him.

‘Look me in the eye, lad.’

He forced his face upwards.

The mason's eyes were still more than half-closed, but standing this near Gaut could make out they were a sky blue. And the man wasn't old, or not as old as he had come across at first, with his hair white as the finest flour and the dust settled in every crease around his eyes and mouth.

'Whyever dost want to work in stone? It's a filthy craft.' He used the length of bone to jab at the piles of dust and stone-waste in the yard. 'And this is high summer. You should see it come Yule.' He barked with mirthless laughter, poking himself in the breastbone. 'And see what a mummery it makes of a man.' He looked down again at the length of carved bone. 'Tha hast somewhat of the feel of the thing, lad. There's plenty folk'd be glad to work in wood, though. Why this? Why stone? Hast ever carved stone?'

It was a fair, fine question.

'I never put mind to why…'

Gaut stared down at his carvings, piled like the kindling his stepmother threatened to make of them. For all his longing, he had never carved stone. There was no native stone in claggy Jorvik.

'Then think now.' The voice was stern. The master's hand laid the length of bone back down along of its fellows.

His father began to say something but stuttered into silence at the master's growl.

Gaut clenched his hands. He wondered how he could ever put his thoughts into words. Then he saw something. The far side of the yard.

Where the nearmost upright wooden post of the lean-to was set into the clayey soil.

'Look here, master?'

He tilted his face up, imploring.

The master said nothing, but he followed Gaut's lead across the yard.

'Gaut–'

But Gaut ignored his father.

He squatted down and pulled away a rotten splinter of wood, long as his belt-knife. 'This wood,' he said. 'Elm, I'd reckon, herra?'

The master nodded.

'And been here – what, ten years?'

The master sucked his teeth. 'Not so many. New-made for me when archbishop set me in charge. Eight years since.'

'And it wicks up the wet.' Gaut stared at the rotten wood with distaste. 'New wood fights back,' he said softly. 'Knots. Grain. They turn the knife's tip. Snap it, happen.'

'So, get a better knife.'

Gaut shook his head.

'All that strife, herra, and then it gets old and does this to thee.' He dropped the sliver of rotten wood back into the pale dust. 'It's sad, soft stuff, wood. Bone's better, almost!' His fists were tight-clenched again. 'When a song can live till Doomsday, why should a king's gravestone last for less?'

The master mason looked sceptical. 'And tha'dst claim stone doesn't fight?'

'It won't fight me.' He didn't know where he got this new assurance from. Perhaps he had nothing left to lose. He suddenly, desperately, didn't want to go back to that damp little house full of small children bent on crawling into the hearth or upsetting the pots of fermenting piss his stepmother had left out to rett her flax in.

'Come in,' the master said suddenly. He turned on Gaut's father, raising a warning finger. 'Stay without, thee.'

Under the thatch of the lean-to, there was a youth, chipping away at another of the great troughs. The air was stuffy and thick with dust.

He looked up as they came in, and set his mallet and iron-tipped chisel carefully down.

'Master Myredah.'

'Sandulf.' The mason nodded a greeting. 'This is Gaut Bjornson. Tell him how long tha hast been working for me.'

'Three years come Michaelmas,' the boy said. He looked to be fifteen or sixteen, but Gaut wasn't interested in him. His eyes were drawn irresistibly to the shaft held in a wooden framework resting against the back wall. It was still only roughed out: a long solid rectangle of white stone with panels of brawny, back-bent, intertwined animals – dogs on one side, and serpents, he found on the left, and birds to the right. Peer as he might, he couldn't see what was carved on the face set against the wall.

'Like it?'

'Já, herra.' He had no words. The stone was alive.

'The Christ on the last face.'

'And in the – the?'

Gaut gestured.

Each panel of the tense, supple birds and beasts was carved in an arched frame, and to the top left and right of each arch there was a blank space, like triangles but with the curve of the arch for their long side. Like wings. Arched wings.

'Spandrels.'

'Spandrels.' He tried out the new word. 'What to put in the spandrels?'

The master frowned. 'I was ettling to leave them thus.'

'Nej!' Gaut picked up a piece of charcoal and leapt forward.

Sandulf gave a strangled cry but the master snapped, and he was silent at once.

‘Angels, herra,’ Gaut said, blind to everything but his vision.

‘No room.’

‘Já, but there is.’ He sketched with quick, confident lines. ‘A wing, see? And another one the other side.’

‘But where’d tha put face?’ The master was shaking his head. ‘There’s no room, above arch.’

‘On the corners!’ Gaut had never felt so alive. ‘Like this.’ He turned and backed up to the corner of the stone, stretching his arms up and away behind him like the wings he could see so clearly. ‘Angel’s face on the corner. His wings like this, above and behind, one to each side of the stone. Above the arch, the wing-tips of two angels meet…’ He turned to finish his drawing.

The charcoal was snatched from his fingers.

‘Now I track thee. So the face, here…’ Master Myredah sketched a dusty black oval, roughly the shape of a head, across the corner and over the two adjoining sides of the stone. ‘And then I cut it back…’ He stood a step or two away, and contemplated, and nodded in satisfaction. ‘Já.’

Then he turned and looked at Gaut.

‘This is a new thing. A shaft – what’s a shaft? Nowt but four flat sides. Never thought of this, using the corners, bringing them into the pattern.’

Gaut stood still, his elation ebbing. Was this bad, to think of a new thing?

The master’s face was grim.

‘Sandulf.’

‘Herra.’

‘Tell Gaut Bjornson what work I have thee do. And take that mardy look off thy face.’

‘I rough out.’ Sandulf’s voice was still sullen. ‘I sharpen the chisels. I sweep the floor.’

The master nodded.

‘And if tha comest to me, lad’ – he swung round to Gaut – ‘mind, tha’ll do same. Years and bloody years of it. Canst thole it?’

Gaut thought for a long moment. Years of back-breaking, finger-smashing drudgery. And – he stole a glance at Sandulf’s knotted, wiry frame – years of Sandulf celebrating having someone smaller to kick about.

He looked at the mess of smeary black lines he and the master had left on the angles of the cross-shaft.

He straightened his back.

‘I can.’

The master nodded. He ducked under the thatch, out into the blinding yard.

‘Bjorn!’ His voice was brisk, and warmer than Gaut had yet heard it. ‘From Coll, tha says? I’m a Lewis man mysen, by birth, any road. Shall us broach a cask of ale? Us men of the Suthreyjar have to stand together…’

The voices faded.

Gaut and Sandulf stared at each other.

Figures

FIGURE 1 Gaut and his father arrive at Master Myredah's village.

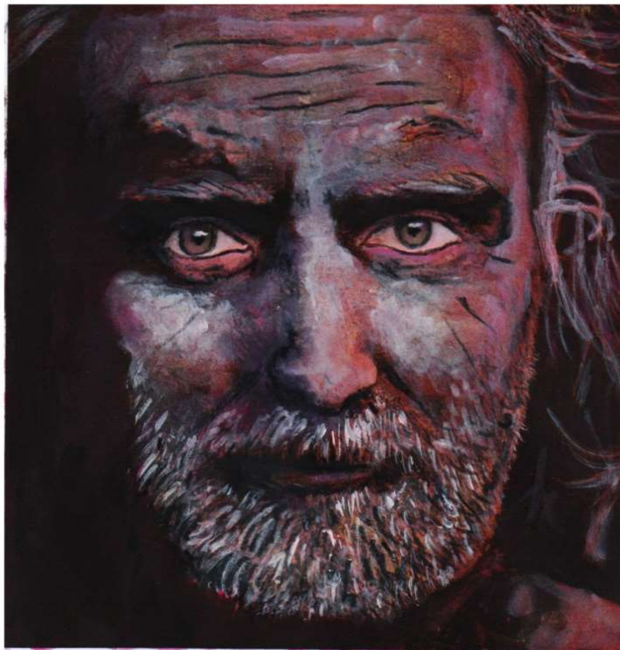

FIGURE 2 Master Myredah.

FIGURE 3 Gaut shows his work.

FIGURE 4 Gaut’s art is weighed by Master Myredah.

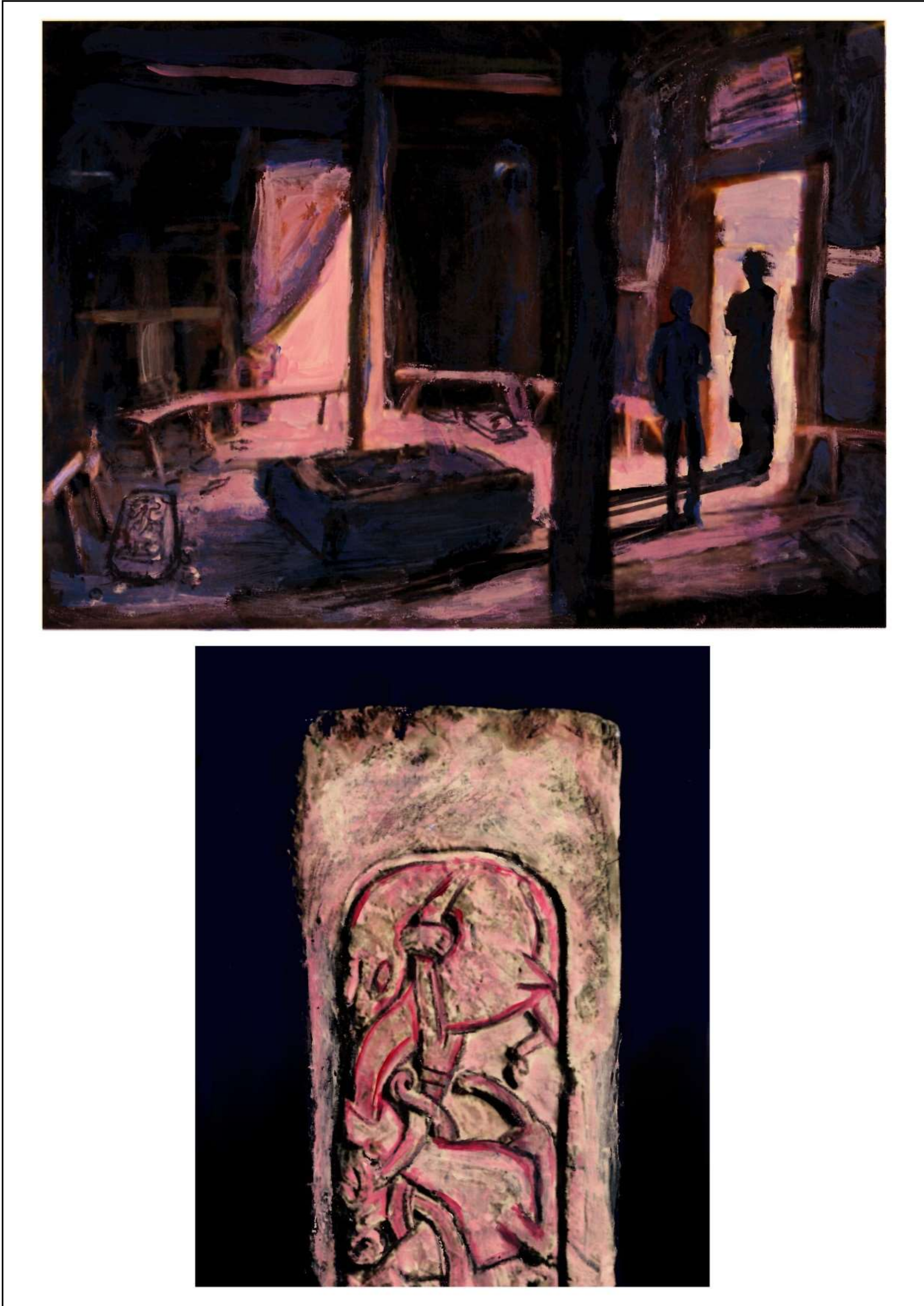

FIGURE 5 Master Myredah's workshop.

FIGURE 6 Gaut's inspiration.

FIGURE 7 Something new.

FIGURE 8 The Newgate 1 cross-shaft, now in the Yorkshire Museum, York. (Image courtesy of York Museums Trust. ©York Museums Trust (Yorkshire Museum). Accession number: YORYM: 1993.714).

FIGURE 9 The Romano-British temple at Springhead (Kent) according to T. A. Goskar (2011). (Credit: T. A. Goskar and Wessex Archaeology (https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/)).