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Prehistoric 'Taskscapes': Representing gender, age and the geography of work.

Abstract

With no written language of their own it has fallen on recent generations to provide the narratives of prehistoric peoples. This paper examines visual representations of prehistoric ('stone age') societies in popular science published in Britain from 1960s to the present. Stereotyping of gender and division of labour, including its spatiality, is an obvious example of the projection of modern societies' views on to the past and this is evident in the material examined in this study. Specific images often become 'viral' as uncritically repeated 'memes' (units of cultural transmission) that reinforce stereotypes, for example the 'cave woman' as 'drudge', trapped in the domestic sphere. Such stereotypes remain prevalent in popular science books aimed at children as well as adults.

Key words: Prehistory, meme, taskscape, geography, popular science, gender, work

Introduction: through a mirror darkly

With no written language of their own it has fallen to recent generations to write the narratives of prehistoric peoples. Prehistoric art and artefacts provide some evidence of social, economic and ecological relations and their spatiality, but representations of prehistoric life based on these are often highly conjectural, and may say as much about ourselves as the past. There is also a tendency to focus on 'tasks' and use of tools rather than human socialising (excepting ritualised themes),

despite the embeddedness of 'technical practices' in sociality¹. Prehistory is a veritable *tabula rasa* on which to project 'normalisations' of gender and age roles and their spatiality. Recent decades have seen a growth in interest in 'engendering archaeology'², and a better understanding of the roles of women and children in prehistory, but the extent that this has penetrated the realm of popular scientific educational representations is debatable.

In this paper I examine graphic representations of prehistoric ('stone age') societies in popular science, and the way in which these map trends in the culture that created them. Stereotyping of gender and division of labour is an obvious example of the projection of modern societies' views on the past. The analysis is also concerned with the spatiality of the representations - the geography of gendered roles in the landscape.

Specific images often become 'viral' as uncritically repeated 'memes' (units of cultural transmission)³ that reinforce stereotypes, for example the 'cave woman' as 'drudge'⁴. This study examines images produced for 'popular' educational publications aimed at a range of ages from school children to adults, drawn from public and university libraries in the UK, and the author's own collection.

This paper draws on Ingold's concept of the 'taskscape'⁵. Ingold argues against the dichotomy of 'naturalistic' versus 'culturalistic' concepts of landscape and for a 'dwelling perspective' in which the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of - and testimony to - the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in doing so, have left there something of themselves.⁶ For Ingold the 'taskscape' is an array of inter-related activities; here he appears to echo the

landscape historian W.G. Hoskins, for who an understanding of landscape was arrived at by striving' ...to hear the men and women talking and working, and creating what has come down to us'⁷.

Given that most visualisations of prehistory focus on 'tasks' and 'technology' the concept of the 'taskscape' provides a useful means to explore how the past is represented as a lived landscape. Ingold uses Pieter Bruegel the Elder's (1565) painting *The Harvesters* to illustrate his ideas. Both Ingold and Hoskins, however, tend to project a positive, even romanticised⁸, view of landscape as a 'dwelling'. Ingold's discussion of *The Harvesters* makes no comment on the socio-political or economic structures within which the people portrayed operate. Nor does he examine power structures invested in the 'church' or in local elites, (he ignores a castle in the mid-ground as a representation of power in the landscape). This paper seeks a more nuanced and critical understanding of gender and age roles within portrayals of the 'taskscape', by adopting the geographic concept of site and situation⁹. This helps to differentiate the taskscape into the domestic realm of the settlement (site) and the surrounding resource space (situation) with their attendant practices (e.g. hunting, food preparation) - see figure 1.

[Figure 1: The taskscape as site and situation.](#)

Distorted taskscapes?

While undertaking this research the *New Scientist*, a respected UK science news magazine, drew criticism for its portrayal of prehistoric peoples. An illustration that accompanied the article¹⁰, was dominated by over a dozen men engaged in

hunting, tool making or building, but just one woman, standing inactive. I was one of a number of people who wrote to the magazine. Our concerns were acknowledged by the editorial team and a single 'representative' letter was published (25 July 2015), signed by eighteen anthropologists and archaeologists. It elicited this response: "*We try hard to present a realistic gender balance in our articles, but this time we fell short of our own standards. We will try harder.*" A check of 'back issues' indicated, however, that this image was not unique, for example, another 'cover story', 'Riddles of Our Past' (24 March 2012) included an illustration dominated by males; the only female 'form' a Palaeolithic figurine. Other 'features' concerning human evolution between 2011 to 2014, also had full page images that included male figures only. While anecdotal, this example provides evidence of the need to be vigilant to bias. Alison Wylie, writing at the start of the 1990s¹¹, was positive 'about the prospects for development of an archaeology of gender'; yet over three decades later, popular science does not appear to have caught up.

While representations of prehistoric societies have tended to reflect dominant discourses, new ways of conceptualising and envisaging the world may emerge. Within an approach that recognises the importance of 'memes' as units of cultural transmission, these may be regarded as 'hopeful monsters', large leaps in conceptualisation that can lead to 'macro-mutations' in representation of the roles of people within prehistory.

Representations of 'deep-time' as 'viral memes'

Visual representations of 'deep-time' (prehistory) are reliant on conjecture and imagination as well as science, but once made concrete can persist. Coined by John McPhee¹² the term 'deep time' is an acknowledgment of the cognitive dissonance created by the immense timescales involved in prehistory¹³. Unlike historic times where contemporary texts and images can be drawn on, 'deep time' must be constructed from the fragmentary evidence of palaeontology and archaeology, including limited symbolic representations. This partial evidence provides ample opportunity to project our own concerns and attitudes on the past. While increasingly sophisticated science may provide evidence to temper flights of fancy or the imposition of hegemonic discourses on representations of past peoples, this can still be over-ridden by the unconscious biases of their authors.

The 'meme' - as opposed to the 'gene' - is a unit of cultural imitation and replication that thrives in brains or the products of brains (books, computers, websites, etc.). Visual representations of prehistoric human culture (e.g. hunting scenes, the hearth, tool making) can be regarded as memes, or *meme complexes*; for example, domestic scenes, usually involve several memes, e.g. 'man as tool-maker', and 'woman as 'drudge' (Figure 1). Dawkins regards memes as a form of 'cultural DNA' and uses the concept to explain how ideas about the world might flourish in specific populations¹⁴; although he is careful to state that the 'meme pool' is *not* organized in the same consistent manner as the 'gene pool'. Large step mutations in memes may occur because they 'arise less from random copying error than from active reinterpretation by the receiving mind; and they can be accepted, rejected,

and reaccepted over the course of the lives of the organisms whose minds are their carriers'¹⁵.

Figure 2. 'Woman as drudge', Illustration from Figuier (1871) *Primitive Man*

The meme is adopted as a helpful concept to explore the evolution, persistence, and occasional mutation or extinction of ideas about the world¹⁶. Worldviews or 'schema' that are spread by memes can be 'contagious', in the sense that 'infection' can mean to influence the mood or emotion. While its broader meaning '*to taint; to corrupt*' is relevant to their 'viral' influence as part of hegemonic discourse, based on 'certitudes' of understandings of the past¹⁷.

Canonical images of human prehistory

The person who did much to alert a wider public to the role of images of prehistory in creating biased views of past life was the evolutionary biologist, Stephen J Gould. Gould adopted the generic term 'canonical' to describe images of 'deep time' that represent an hegemonic viewpoint¹⁸. Gould's particular concern was the manner in which images are used to explain scientific ideas, but *also* to impose *socio-cultural meanings*, such as the contested view that 'progress' is inherent in evolution. He was critical of the teleological bias inherent in most representations of the 'parade of life through the ages', which constructed evolution as leading to 'Man' - 'a comfortable view of human inevitability and superiority'¹⁹. His concept alerts us to the cultural assumptions these images contain – as Gould notes

'Iconography ... provides the best domain for grasping th[e] interplay of social and intellectual factors in the growth of knowledge – and the iconography of [deep time] opens a revealing window upon ourselves'²⁰.

Canonical images of prehistoric peoples include several recurrent memes/meme complexes - these are almost exclusively dominated by adult (non-elderly) males; e.g. 'the hunt', and 'tool-making' (Figure 2). While hunting scenes are extremely common, scenes involving foraging for plant food, collecting wood or water, or hunting for 'small game' involving women are almost non-existent - women are arrested within a 'domestic bubble'. Ethnographic studies of modern societies have been used to justify assumptions about division of labour in prehistory (although these have been criticised for assuming no change from past to present²¹). Yet certain roles, for example women and children as foragers and hunters of small-game²² are largely ignored in popular representations.

Figure 3: 'Tool making' Illustration from Figuier (1871) *Primitive Man*

Conventional representations are usually focused on people (generally adults) interacting with their *material world*; making tools, butchering meat, scraping hides²³, and rarely engaged in social-cultural interactions, except 'religious/shamanistic' and funeral rites. The latter are usually exclusively male or male-led and are still linked to material culture - painted caves, or built burial sites/funerary objects. This evidence-based engagement with the past through

artefacts and the biophysical environment is not unreasonable, but limits representations to specific tasks and gender/age roles. This paper does not dispute evidence for gender and age role differentiation from ethnographic analogues and some material evidence, but is concerned with how these are represented; for example, the extremely limited number of images of women or children within the wider environment, as foragers. We might well ask, 'who picked all those hazel nuts?'¹²⁴ Linda Hurcombe²⁵ makes an interesting point in relation to taskscapes, noting that food-gathering roles may extend to craft-ways; females collecting food plants were more likely to gather and then manufacture craft goods made from plant material (e.g. basketwork), illustrating the complex relationship between tasks within the site and the wider situation. Others have also pointed to gender roles (and tasks) in professional archaeology as implicated in a skewed 'woman-at-home' ideology applied to roles in the past²⁶.

A number of studies have addressed popular scientific representations of prehistoric peoples. Stephanie Moser's seminal *Ancestral Images*¹²⁷ provides an important contribution to understanding of shifts in representations of past people. She provides evidence for some attempts to revise dominant memes; for example, the work of illustrator Jay H. Matternes in the 1960s. His 'hopeful monsters' do not however appear to have displaced prevalent stereotypes, despite his 'pains to show greater interaction between males and the young and to present children as having a role.'¹²⁸ Others, such as Julia Drell²⁹, have focused on how the Neanderthal's have been portrayed; early depictions focusing on this group as a brutish 'other', while more recent constructions emphasize their 'humanity'.

Gifford-Gonzalez's study of illustrations of Paleolithic people is the first, however, to provide systematic and quantitative evidence for understanding gender and age roles³⁰. Her study involved the analysis of eighty-seven images in twenty-two publications (1921 to 1991). An important element of her analysis was the concept of 'gratuitous detail', pertinent to the taskscape approach adopted here. She regards scenes that are rendered in exceptional detail as sustaining plausibility (and the science behind them); rendering 'speculative' scenes as 'natural'. Martha Lucy also notes the importance of including 'scientifically-accurate props' to achieve 'veracity' in representations of prehistory³¹, while Cornelius Hortorf argues that objects and technologies gain 'authenticity' when used as props in 'staged' settings in open-air museums³². Closely linked is Moser's recognition that 'photo-realist' art enhances believability³³.

For each image Gifford-Gonzalez assessed the 'locale', types of activity, and gender, age and positioning of individuals within the scene. She found that adult males were over-represented in the wider landscape, and under-represented in 'domestic' settings, with the reverse for women. She concluded 'the cumulative perspective on women and men in the landscape bears a peculiarly Western, woman's place-is-in-the-home, cultural stamp'. Her comprehensive assessment of the positioning of individuals within the scene reinforces her conclusion that 'illustrations' tend to present men as 'active' and women as 'passive' or engaged in domestic work. She identified key 'schemata' (memes) within her 'dioramas'; those associated with the camp, for instance, include 'Man-the-toolmaker', 'Madonna-with-child' (a youthful

female holding a baby) and the 'Drudge-on-a-hide' (a female on all-fours dressing a hide).

Gifford-Gonzalez focused on the woman as 'drudge' as a key schema of gender role differentiation. She notes that, technology (apart from a scraper) is conspicuously absent. The individual is always shown on hands and knees, never standing or sitting at a frame, despite modern ethnographic evidence for this as possible in prehistory. The 'drudge' appears to be a relatively modern meme, with women in nineteenth century images of prehistory often shown standing to work, including dressing a hide; see Otto Emmanuel Bay's history painting 'Station lacustre de Moosee près de Mooseedorf' (1891)³⁴.

If we regard Louis Figuier's (1870) *Primitive Man*³⁵, as one of the most influential books of its time, it does contain a picture of a kneeling woman grinding grain (Figure 1), but this is atypical of the majority of images in his book, which tend to reflect a 'classical' model of womanhood (see Figure 3). This is in line with most pre- or anti-Darwinian models (academic history paintings, illustrations, or sculptures) of prehistoric peoples produced during the mid to late nineteenth century - 'to depict early man [sic] in his nakedness as anything other than a model of perfection was regarded by academic artists as a betrayal of the tradition going back to antiquity'³⁶

Figure 4, 'Classic model of womanhood' Illustration from Figuier (1871) *Primitive Man*.

Gifford-Gonzalez regards the 'drudge' as an entrenched construction of women's primeval role *and* her modern 'place'. The 'drudge', she argues, signifies women as 'less-than-human'; reinforced by the fact that she is generally positioned in the background, face blurred, or hidden by unkempt hair. Once established, these schema became viral, reinforcing a view of women 'as abject and anonymous, animalistic, unacceptable to those who can stand on their own two feet'³⁷.

Canonical memes in UK publications

Gifford-Gonzalez's conclusions were based on US and French examples. Her observations in general are supported by UK publications (see below). While Gifford-Gonzalez focused on the Paleolithic Cro-Magnon people, my own examination supports the ubiquity of many elements of her 'schemata' for popular images of a range of Paleolithic to Neolithic 'modern humans' (*Homo sapiens*). Data was also collected for images of Neanderthals (*H. neanderthalensis*) as these display some similar characteristics in terms of representations of domestic activity and roles.

My study examined twenty-eight UK popular science publications, covering 1961 to 2016, and 250 images and the categorization of the activity/role of 806 individuals. A typography of the taskscape was developed for both the domestic realm (site) (seventeen categories) and for activities in the wider environment (situation) (seven categories largely related to procuring food, including hunting, butchery, farming,

foraging). The categories for 'domestic' included activities such as pot and tool-making, grinding cereals, scraping a hide, as well as other 'roles', including 'inactive elder', child playing or observing. Ritual scenes (e.g. cave painting, funerary activity) were also analyzed in terms of gender and age. The authors of the books in this survey include nine female authors and twenty-three male, while four artists are female, against twenty-three males.

Gender, age and the prehistoric taskscape in pictures

Images of prehistoric taskscape that portray human interaction with the wider environment are generally concerned with obtaining food resources, occasionally other activities (building monuments, quarrying, migration or intergroup warfare). Very few images show women distant from hearth or home. Of the 183 individuals depicted in images of hunting, foraging or cultivation over two-thirds (n=142) involve 'big-game hunting' and 'kill-site butchery'. In no image are females shown as involved in these activities (see below for discussion of other hominin species). If fishing and small game are included the percentage rises to 95%, but with only one woman involved in fishing³⁸. Of nine individuals (three images) shown 'foraging' for berries, eggs or roots, all are female, and the latest published 1992. Foraging is severely under-represented in depictions of the wider landscape.

More recent publications might be expected to have benefitted from revised understandings of gender roles, but that does not appear to be the case. Scenes in

a publication (2000) by Channel 4's Time Team³⁹ included most of the stereotypical memes. Macdonald's⁴⁰ *The Stone Age News* (1998) is an interesting case, in that several artists were involved, some perpetuating the classic meme-complex, including the 'drudge-on-a-hide', while others provide positive role models, including a female involved in trading and a 'deep-cave' painting ceremony, albeit observing. The latter is the only one of eleven 'deep cave' images to include a woman (male n = 58). The example of the cave painting is illustrative of changes in understanding that might be assumed to influence popular representations, as recent studies suggest that women and young children may also have been involved in symbolic activities (specifically the creation of 'handprints'), although scientific proof of gender or age must be treated with caution⁴¹. It is worth noting Paul Jamin's painting 'Peintre Décoratuer á L'âge de Pierre', (1903), which shows a sociable scene of cave painting, with children and women involved. Unfortunately, while history paintings of the nineteenth century do employ some positive schema, these have given way to a dominant view of 'deep cave' rituals as an entirely male domain. In this survey cave rituals, other than painting, only ever involve adolescent and adult males (n=41).

Representation of children also provides a revealing window on the society that produced them. Children, according to Gifford-Gonzalez, either play or observe, but *never* work. They play no productive role in the taskscape. This fits a modern narrative of the 'cult of childhood'. Gifford-Gonzalez's observation that "*Women (and never men, oldsters or bigger children) hold babies, touch children*"⁴² is also confirmed by the UK examples, with one notable exception, where an elder male

minds a young child⁴³. 'Childhood', as we know it for the majority of children in Britain, is a product of social change and policy such as the Factory Act (1833) and Mines Act (1842) that ended the systematic employment of children⁴⁴. It is interesting to note that Louis Figuier's (1871) *Primitive Man*, included images of children working (Figures 1 and 4), an indication that current 'memes' of prehistoric 'childhood' as a time of learning via observation and play is a macro-mutation consistent with western society's changing attitudes. Recent archaeological evidence suggests that children did take part in tool-making, even if mainly a learning process; this included flint knapping⁴⁵ and ceramic production⁴⁶. It is also inconceivable that children took no part in the foraging. Of the fifty-seven human children represented, all either play (39%) or observe (61%). No Neanderthal children play, they only ever observe.

Figure 5: 'Child working' Illustration from Figuier (1871) *Primitive Man*.

'Domestic bliss'

Having established that women are rarely shown outside of the limited task-space of the home or encampment (site), it is worth exploring their roles as presented in the visual schemata (memes) as identified by Gifford-Gonzalez. The first difference to emerge is with respect to representations of female work as 'degraded'. This appears to be much more mixed in the UK publications, especially with regard to Gifford-Gonzalez's consistently 'negative' image of the 'drudge'. The 'drudge' meme

is pervasive, with examples across all decades from the 1960s to 2010s in the UK publications, with 24% of all adult females in the domestic realm shown on hands and knees either grinding corn (n=8) or scraping a hide (n=17). One example of a man on hands and knees dressing a hide does exist⁴⁷, although his head is upright and front facing. If we focus specifically on domestic tasks associated with manufacture of tools and clothing, or food preparation, we uncover a very clear gender bias. Despite utilizing stone tools (e.g. to dress hides) females are never shown making them, while tool making by males represents 32% all tasks represented (and 73% of all male 'domestic' activity). The tools made by men are generally artefacts that would be used for hunting or other activities referent of the wider landscape. 'Women's work' is almost equally divided between clothing and food preparation - females involved in clothing preparation (including dressing hides) is 47% of all such female activity, while food preparation and cooking (including grinding grain) is 45%. Pot making is the only task that males (n=3) and females (n=4) are shown undertaking in roughly equal numbers.

The difference, when compared to Gifford Gonzalez's analysis, is that in the 1960s and 1970s many representations show women in an *apparent* state of contented domesticity. This appears to be in line with ideals of 'womanhood' and 'home' that developed as part of the 'cult of domesticity', remaining dominant well into the mid-twentieth century. These images of 'blissful domestication' contrast with males as active in the wider world⁴⁸, but differ markedly from Gifford-Gonzalez's observations of the 'abject'. The image of the 'woman/mother' as inhabiting the domestic realm and the 'man/father' engaging with the wider world would mirror

and reinforce the experience and images of contemporary society, especially of children. This difference is typified by the highly successful Ladybird Books, produced in a large number of thematic series in the UK. These books were extremely popular during the 1950-70s, and provided a very positive gloss on family life of the time:

The 1950s to the 1970s are widely considered to be Ladybird's 'golden age'. This period saw the post-war baby boomers come of age, creating a mass of new consumers who were open, confident and unrestrained. Ladybird books reflected this optimism with its forward-looking design and illustrations, which depicted a utopian vision of modern Britain. ⁴⁹

These books typically depicted women as 'housewives' (although women were shown working in a variety of roles and institutions such as the police or in hospitals). These women had access to modern technology, and 'kept home' while their children engaged in play or learning. This view of society was also projected on to prehistory. A good example is the Ladybird *Stone Age Man in Britain*⁵⁰. Illustrated by John Kenney, acknowledged as one of the classic Ladybird artists of the period, the book includes twenty-two illustrations, of which six focus on the domestic realm. Women are portrayed as confident, efficient individuals, whether lighting a fire, grinding cereal, or making clothes. Unlike Gifford-Gonzalez 'drudge' they occupy the foreground and their faces are visible - there is no attempt to 'brutalize' or make 'less-than-human'. A graphic representation of task-spaces and a composite taskscape is provided in Figure X. This book is unusual in that four

illustrations are devoted to the construction of Stonehenge, hence the large number of men associated with this ritual activity shown in the graphic. Nevertheless, this book is illustrative of the wider findings of the male and female realms.

Figure 6: Composite taskscape: *Stone Age Man in Britain, A Ladybird Book* 1961.

This is repeated in other Ladybird Books of the period. Richard Bowood's⁵¹ *Our land in the Making*⁵²; illustrated by Ronald Lampitt, another classic Ladybird artist, contains an archetypal 'domestic' meme-complex with most of Gifford-Gonzalez's 'schema' represented - from the 'Madonna with child' to returning hunters, but again there is no suggestion of women as less-than-human. Muriel Goaman's⁵³ *Food through the Ages* contains four images devoted to the 'stone-ages', of twenty-four. Stereotypes of domesticity are reinforced, both in prehistory and beyond, but the images of women are generally positive, although this book does contain the one image that fits Gifford-Gonzalez's negative schema - face obscured, back to the viewer, on hands and knees butchering a carcass (p.6). This example draws attention to Gifford-Gonzalez concept of 'gratuitous detail' discussed earlier. It reminds us that memes are complex constructs, hence, whether a face is obscured by unkempt hair or not can significantly affect what is connoted. Gifford-Gonzalez construction of the 'drudge' has much in common with Judith Berman's 'savage' meme in which longish, unkempt hair is a characteristic of depictions of Paleolithic peoples⁵⁴. Berman states that this 'conventionalized' image is a dominant iconography, and

draws on historically varied examples to confirm the prevalence of 'bad-hair' - or 'noncoiffure' - from late nineteenth century images (including Cormon's famous painting of 'Cain' - exhibited in 1880) to Charles R Knight's work in the mid twentieth century. Berman notes that this is inconsistent with material culture of the period, especially the Venus sculptures that provide evidence of coiffure or head-dressing. The image of females as 'abject drudge' would suggest that 'bad hair' should predominate. In fact, it is very variable in UK publications. Patricia Rice's study⁵⁵ of prehistoric Venuses is also informative. She questions the traditional view that Upper Palaeolithic figurines are male glorifications of fertility, and points out that few represent pregnant women and none nursing babies. She suggests 'womanhood' rather than 'motherhood' was being celebrated. Reviewing the debate between those who see the figurines as evidence of goddess worship versus more recent ideas about female autogenesis, Naomi Hamilton suggests, 'that this argument is inspired not so much by compelling evidence either way as by ideology concerning sex and gender roles both past and present'⁵⁶.

By the 1970s and 1980s the image of confident women appears to become embedded as a viral meme. In *Archaeology*⁵⁷ (aimed at senior school children) all of the illustrations by Angus McBride show women as competent individuals. One specific element of 'gratuitous detail' that may be important here is his attention to hair. In illustrations of the Paleolithic and Mesolithic McBride has avoided unkempt hair, and has even created two head-and-shoulder images to display female ornamentation in which the hair is clearly clean and deliberately dressed, in sharp contrast to Gifford-Gonzalez's '*abject and anonymous, animalistic*' 'drudges'.

If we review the Ladybird Books we see an interesting continuum. They show most women to have uncoiffured hair in the Paleolithic, although not disheveled. Hair is

only dressed in images of the Neolithic. Similarly for Barr's *Primitive Man* ⁵⁸.

Gilbert's *Prehistoric Man*⁵⁹ is more typical of Gifford-Gonzalez's assessment - both women and men are 'savage' in appearance, with disheveled hair, and the image of the female scraping a hide is an archetype of the 'drudge', with face obscured by unkempt hair.

Recent publications tend to provide more nuanced illustrations based, perhaps, on evidence of coiffure from artefacts. Caselli's *First Civilizations*⁶⁰ provides a series of images of competent women as part of group systems of production and consumption from the Palaeolithic onwards. The figures in illustrations of the Palaeolithic have well managed hair in a 'bob', or a practical 'bun'. Others that portray women in this more positive manner include Burrell's *On the threshold of history*, and Andrews and Stringer's chapter in *The Book of Life* ⁶¹. Retrograde examples do however exist, for example Time Team's *Timechester*, in which a group of *Homo erectus* are rendered as entirely naked and unkempt in a diorama representing the Paleolithic period. However, it is unlikely that Paleolithic *Homo sapiens* would have been displayed differently, as those illustrated for the Neolithic are clothed, but equally unkempt. In the later texts, images emphasising drudgery reappear⁶². An image in *The Secrets of Stonehenge* is particularly telling; a young female is shown on all fours stating 'Our job is to grind up the barley seed'.⁶³..

Some of the recent examples examined have adopted an intriguing approach to representing early modern humans. They have used illustrations or photographs of the native San peoples of southern Africa rather than Europeans as their model⁶⁴. The illustration in Caird is complex, the foreground image includes five individuals, and is representative of the classic 'domestic' cave-mouth meme-complex; it

includes one adult female, breast-feeding one of two infants ('Maddonna with child'), and two males (one an elder). The two males are 'tool-making', however, the female is visually the strongest of the adults, head raised while the men are bowed. This contrasts strongly with Lynch and Barrett's *Walking with Cavemen*⁶⁵. This publication uses photographs to represent lives of 150,000 years ago. The females are clearly in a subordinate role. In one image a woman is shown on hands and knees scraping bare ground in search of water, her face obscured - a return to the 'drudge'. This use of a very specific group, who are clearly 'other' to the readership, may be an attempt to appear more objective - we are aware that these peoples are hunter-gatherers, so the image is 'believable'. What is more interesting, perhaps, is that this 'othering' moves the imagery away from its role as a mirror to us. As Siân Jones has argued, the popular role of archaeology has often been to create a genealogy, to create links to our origins and community⁶⁶, these images move away from this role.

One factor not captured by any illustration, whether suggesting abject drudgery or domestic bliss, is the time dimension. As Janet Momsen⁶⁷ notes, based on contemporary studies, women carry a double or triple burden, "coping with housework, childcare and subsistence food production... [e]verywhere women work longer hours than men."

Hopeful Monsters or adolescent fantasies?

Both this and Gifford-Gonzalez's survey identify women as trapped within the domestic 'bubble', although she interprets this within a context of overt female degradation. The UK survey provides a different picture, one, which still placing women in a very restricted, subservient position, presents this within a (putatively) 'positive' setting based on the cults of domesticity, family and motherhood.

Females only escape the confines of the domestic realm (site) in representations of earlier *Homo* species (e.g. *H. ergaster*, *H. erectus*), species where mobility would have been the norm. This atavistic imagery is consistent with a teleological vision of increasing sophistication as biological and cultural evolution reaches its apogee in *Homo sapiens*. In these earlier worlds an older female (*H. ergaster*) can be represented hunting - "*clearly past childbearing age she...can help with the slow and steady hunt.*"⁶⁸

Are there any 'hopeful monsters' (novel memes) that challenge this restrictive view of women's roles in taskscapes? Only one illustration⁶⁹ shows a woman engaged in fishing, and even this is as 'helper', collecting fish caught by a male, while carrying an infant ('Madonna' meme) and in sight of their camp. The quest for active females requires a wider search. Key word searches of web-based images produced little. Two exceptions are reconstructions of the Oberkassel double burial (14,000 years ago)⁷⁰ and the BBC1 series *Planet of the Apemen* (televised 2011), both illustrate a woman involved in hunting. Three pictorial reconstructions (different artists) show the Oberkassel couple arrayed for hunting, although only one shows the woman handling the bow. These reconstructions are based on material evidence from the burial. The BBC1 programme on the other hand builds on a

fictional narrative in which modern humans hunt for horses. It has a young woman taking part, wielding a stone-tipped spear. The BBC1 programme is flawed by the fact that the young woman is portrayed rather overtly as an anomaly in her own setting; as a 'proto-feminist' arguing her way into the hunt, while her mother and other women are depicted in traditional roles. The documentary contains a classic scene in which women squat and sew skins (including the young woman), while children 'play' behind them, and men discuss the hunt. The young woman's mother explains to her why the division of labour is how it is - this is reinforced by an interview with the Matt Ridley, who rapidly turns a simplistic discussion of the sexual division of labour, into an argument for its virtue for societies as a whole. Representations of woman as a weapon wielder has some precedent in the vogue for history paintings in the late nineteenth century. Two paintings in particular illustrate this, Emmanuel Benner's (1892) 'Une Famille á l'âge de Pierre' and Leon Maxime Faivre's (1888) 'Deux Mères', both show mothers brandishing stone-axes, preparing to fight a bear. These are unusual but do fit a mode of illustration that displayed women more positively, clearly influenced by classical models of womanhood and body.

Other media in where women might be represented as active in the landscape is computer gaming. The concern here, however, is the tendency to create women that are fantasies. Adolescent and young males, as well as female players, often assume 'female' avatars within interactive games, including dressing and arming them. The predominant (and predetermined) form appears to be athletic, narrow

hipped and large breasted, as evinced by pre-launch images from 'BC' an action-adventure video game development for Microsoft's Xbox system, to be set 'in a Harryhausen-esque prehistoric time period'⁷¹, or by the more androgynous archer in 'Stone Rage' (Mountainwheel Games). While few games are yet set in stone-age prehistory, it remains a potentially rich environment for education, but also for indulging fantasies. The latter is already well established in popular cinema, for example, Raquel Welch in Ray Harryhausen's (1966) 'One Million Years B.C.', and the female characters in '10,000 B.C.' (2008).

Conclusion

The examination of popular UK education publications of human prehistory (stone-age) generally supports the view that gender and age roles are dealt with in stereotypic forms, typical supporting an androcentric worldview of the taskscape. Women and children are almost entirely 'displayed' within the 'domestic bubble', and generally in passive roles. Several female memes are ubiquitous, such as the 'woman as drudge' or 'Madonna' with child, although the images in UK publications often present women as confident and competent individuals. These memes, however, remain in strong contrast to males as 'active' hunter, tool-maker, artist or shaman, engaged with the wider taskscape.

There is evidence that macro-mutations of memes and meme-complexes have taken place in the past, for example, the total replacement of 'children at work' by 'children at play', but there is little to suggest that many of the stereotypes are currently undergoing major change outside of the fantasy realm.

Because prehistory provides a relatively blank canvas for the projection of contemporary views of gender and age, it is extremely important that the images used in educational materials, whether designed specifically for school age children and for general popular 'science' texts must be more nuanced. The image of the anonymous female 'drudge' is a negative image that can easily be revised without harm to what can be reasonably reconstructed. As Janet Momsen reminds us, gender roles – household tasks and other roles in the 'economy' of group – are not fixed or globally consistent even today⁷².

It is also important that authors and artists consider the whole balance between the male and female realms. Contemporary analogues, such as the San peoples, suggest that prehistoric woman and children will have been involved in foraging and the capture of small-game. Current memes and meme complexes have yet to break the mould of traditional male and female gender roles or of the role of different age groups. Viral memes persist and endanger narratives of the past that seek more nuanced understandings.

¹ Ingold, Tim, 'The Temporality of the Landscape', *World Archaeology*, 25 (1993) 152-174

² See for example the collection of papers in Gero, Joan M. and Conkey, Margaret W. *Engendering Archaeology: Woman and Prehistory*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, and Gilchrist, Roberta, *Gender and Archaeology: contesting the past*, London: Routledge, 1999.

³ Vujakovic, Peter, 'World-views: art and canonical images in the geographical and life sciences', in *Cartography and Art*, eds Cartwright, W., Gartner, G., and Lehn, A., 135-144 // New York: Springer;. Vujakovic, Peter, 'Warning! Viral memes can seriously alter your worldview', *Maplines*, Spring (2013) 4-6.

⁴ Gifford-Gonzalez, Diana, 'You can hide, but you can't run: representation of women's work in illustrations of Palaeolithic life', *Visual Anthropology Review*, 9 (1993) 22-41

⁵ Ingold, 'The Temporality of the Landscape'.

⁶ Ingold, 'The Temporality of the Landscape', 152.

⁷ Hoskins, W. G. *Fieldwork in Local History*, London: Faber, 1967, 184; cited in Johnson, Matthew, *Ideas of Landscape*, Oxford: Blackwell, 41.

⁸ See discussion of the influence of Romanticism on the work of W. G. Hoskins in Johnson, Matthew, *Ideas of Landscape*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2007

⁹ Roberts, Brian K., *The making of the English Village*, London: Longman 1987

¹⁰ Barras, C. The three ancestral tribes that founded Western civilisation (appeared in print under the headline "Dawn of a continent" 1 July 2015, pp.28-31) *New Scientist*, (2015)
<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22730282-900-the-three-ancestral-tribes-that-founded-western-civilisation/> (accessed 05/02/2016).

¹¹ Wylie, Alison, 'Why is there no archaeology of Gender?' in *Engendering Archaeology: Woman and Prehistory*, eds Gero and Conkey, 31-54 Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 48.

¹² Phee, Farrar, J., *Basin and Range*, New York: Straus & Giroux, 1982.

¹³ Rudwick, Martin. J. S. (1992) *Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World*, Chicago : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992.

¹⁴ Dawkins, Richard, *The Blind Watchmaker*, London: Longman, 1986.

¹⁵ Runciman, W. G. (2002) 'Heritable variation and competitive selection as the mechanisms of sociocultural evolution', in *The Evolution of Cultural Entities*, eds Wheeler, M., Ziman, J. and Boden, A. M., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 9-26.

¹⁶ Dennett, Daniel, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea; evolution and the meaning of life*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

¹⁷ Gero, Joan, M. Honoring Ambiguity/Problematizing Certitude, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 14 (2007):311-327.

¹⁸ Gould, Stephen.J. *Wonderful Life*. London: Hutchinson Radius., 1989, and Gould, Stephen. J. 'Reconstructing (and deconstructing) the past', in, *The Book of Life* (pp.6-21). S.J. Gould. (ed.) London: Ebury-Hutchinson, 1993.

¹⁹ Gould, Stephen J. *Wonderful Life*. London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989.

²⁰ Gould, Stephen J. Reconstructing (and deconstructing) the past.

²¹ Hughes, S. 'Division of labor at a Besant Hunting Camp in Eastern Montana, *Plains Anthropologist*, 36(1991) 25-49

²² LeMoine, G., Woman of the house: Gender, architecture, and ideology in Dorset Prehistory, *Arctic Anthropology*, 40 (2003): 121-138.

²³ Tringham, R. 'Engendered places in prehistory, Gender, Place and Culture', *A Journal of Feminist*

Geography, 1(1994): 169-203.

²⁴ McComb, A. M. G. and Simpson, D. 'The Wild Bunch: Exploitation of the Hazel in Prehistoric Ireland', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Third Series, 58, (1999): 1-16

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Hurcombe, Linda M. *Perishable Material Culture in Prehistory: investigating the missing majority*, London: Routledge, 2014.

²⁶ Gero, Joan, M. Socio-Politics and the Woman-at-home Ideology, *American Antiquity*, 50 (1985): 342-350. Gero provides empirical evidence for role differentiation in professional archaeology. It is interesting to note that images of archaeologists at work in the popular science books examined in this study reflect her findings. Males are often shown managing digs or using highly technical apparatus, while females (far fewer in number) are generally engaged in passive roles, such as note taking, or simply observing.

²⁷ Moser, Stephanie, *Ancestral Images: The Iconography of Human Origins*, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998.

²⁸ Moser, *Ancestral Images*, 165.

²⁹ Drell, Julia, R. R. 'Neanderthals: A history of interpretation', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 19 (2000) 1-24. See also, Rimer, Lee, 'The 'evolution' of Neanderthals over the last 100 years says more about us' <http://www.abroadintheyard.com/evolution-of-neanderthals-over-last-100-years-says-more-about-us/> (accessed 23/03/2017) This site contains one of the illustrations (of a Neanderthal group) by Materness that Moser identified as revising age and gender roles and relationships (endnote 18). See also Hammond, Michael, 'The expulsion of the Neanderthals from Human ancestry: Marcellin Boule and the social context of research', *Social Studies of Science*, 12 (1982), 1-36 and Sommer, Marianne, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Neanderthals as Image and 'Distortion' in Early 20th-Century French Science and Press', *Social Studies of Science*, 36 (2006), 207-240.

³⁰ Gifford Gonzalez, 'You can hide, but you can't run: representation of women's work in illustrations of Palaeolithic life.'

³¹ Lucy, M. 'Cormon's "Cain" and the Problem of the Prehistoric Body', *Oxford Art Journal*, 25 (2) (2002): 109-126.

³² Hortorf, Cornelius, 'The time travellers' tools of the trade: some trends at Lejre', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20 (2014): 782-797.

³³ Moser, *Ancestral Images*, 166.

³⁴ Image available at - <http://lap.unige.ch/plonjon/mythe> (accessed 24/05/2016) Painting in collection of the Musée historique de Berne.

³⁵ Louis Figuier *Primitive Man*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1870.

³⁶ Bindman, D. 'Mankind after Darwin and nineteenth-century art', in, *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts*, eds Donald, Diana, and Munro, Jane, Yale University Press: New Haven, 2009.

³⁷ Gifford Gonzalez, 'You can hide, but you can't run: representation of women's work in illustrations of Palaeolithic life', 37.

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- ³⁹ Lewis, Carenza, Harding, Phil & Aston, Mick *Time Teams' Timechester: a companion to archaeology*, London: Channel 4 Books, 2000.
- ⁴⁰ Macdonald, F. *The Stone Age News*, London: Walker Books, 1998.
- ⁴¹ Galeta, P., Bruzek, J. and Laznickova-Galetova, M. 'Is sex estimation from handprints in prehistoric cave art reliable? A view from biological and forensic anthropology', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 45 (2014): 141-149.
- ⁴² Gifford-Gonzalez, 'You can hide, but you can't run: representation of women's work in illustrations of Palaeolithic life', 35.
- ⁴³ Goaman, Muriel, *Food through the ages* Loughborough: Ladybird - Wills & Hepworth, 1968.
- ⁴⁴ Griffin, E. 'Child Labour; Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians', British Library, (undated) <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/child-labour>, (accessed 24/05/2015).
- ⁴⁵ Bower, B. Children of Prehistory: Stone age kids left their mark on cave art and stone tools, *Science News*, 171 (17), (2007):264-266; Shea, J.J. Child's play: Reflections on the invisibility of children in the Paleolithic record, *Evolutionary Anthropology*, 15 (2006) 212-216; Spikins, P., Hitchins, G., Needham, A. and Rutherford, H. 'The Cradle of Thought: Learning, play and attachment in Neanderthal children', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 33(2014): 111-134.
- ⁴⁶ Kamp, Kathryn A. ; Timmerman, Nichole ; Lind, Gregg ; Graybill, Jules ; Natowsky, Ian, 'Discovering Childhood: Using Fingerprints to Find Children in the Archaeological Record' *American Antiquity*, 64(1999): 309-315
- ⁴⁷ Burrell, Roy, *On the threshold of history*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press 1988, 29
- ⁴⁸ In most the male domain of the 'drama' of the hunt is totally separate from the domestic realm, excepting one specific meme-complex - fishing (often with spears) before a lake village. In this exception, the classic version usually shows two males on a small craft (canoe/raft) actively engaged in fishing, with the domestic scene of a settlement in the background. The lake village with fishing or hunting is a popular meme-complex that occurs in earlier publications, from Figuiet's (1870) *Primitive Man* (trans. of *L'homme primitive*) onwards, and repeated in European history paintings such as Albert Anker's 'Lake Dwelling Woman' (1873), and Paul Jamin's 'Cité lacustre, le retour des hommes est annoncé' (1898).
- ⁴⁹ Penguin UK, 'Vintage Ladybird Collection - 100 years of words and pictures', <http://www.vintageladybird.com/> (accessed 24/05/2016)
- ⁵⁰ Du Garde Peach, L. *Stone Age Man in Britain*, Loughborough: Ladybird - Wills & Hepworth, 1961
- ⁵¹ Bowood, Richard, *Our Land in the Making- Book 1 - Earliest times to Norman Conquest*, Loughborough: Ladybird - Wills & Hepworth, 1966.

⁵² This book does contain one interesting innovation which I have not observed elsewhere, and that is an encounter (exchange of goods) between stone-age and iron-age peoples (all male). The latter (blond haired) are described as 'more civilised' and are all shown in martial pose, while the former (dark haired) are shown in subservient poses, including one on his knees. This echoes cartouches surrounding British maps of empire in which colonial peoples are shown in obeisance to Britannia (Vujakovic, 2009, 2013). Such encounters seem to be rare excepting modern versions (e.g. European encounters with lithic cultures in the Americas and Australasia).

⁵³ Goaman, Muriel, *Food Through the Ages*.

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⁵⁷ Celoria, Francis. *Archaeology*, London: Hamlyn, 1970.

⁵⁸ Barr, Donald, *Primitive Man*, London: Transworld Pub, 1964

⁵⁹ Gilbert, John, *Prehistoric Man*, London: Macdonald Ed, 1973.

⁶⁰ Caselli, Giovanni, *First Civilizations*, London: Macdonald & Co., 1983.

⁶¹ Burrell, Roy, *On the Threshold of History*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press 1988 (p.11),

⁶² For example, Corbishley, M. *An Ancient Land: Prehistory - Vikings*, Oxford: Oxford, 2001; Ganeri A., Martell, H. M. & Williams, B., *Encyclopaedia of World History: From stone age to the 21st Century* Bath: Parragon, 2003.

⁶³ Manning, M. and Granstrom, B., *The Secrets of Stonehenge*, London: Francis Lincoln, 2013, 3-4.

⁶⁴ Caird, Rod, *Ape Man: the story of human evolution*, London: Boxtree 1994 (consultant scientific editor Foley, Robert); and Lynch, John and Barrett, Louise, *Walking with Cavemen: eye-to-eye with your ancestors*, London: Headline Books, 2002.

⁶⁵ Lynch and Barrett *Walking with Cavemen*.

⁶⁶ Jones, Siân, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: constructing identities in the past and the present*, London: Routledge, 1997.

⁶⁷ Momsen, Janet, H. *Gender and Development*, London: Routledge, 2004, 2.

⁶⁸ Lynch and Barrett, *Walking with Cavemen*, 121.

⁶⁹ Andrews and Stringer, 'Primates Progress'.

⁷⁰ LandesMuseum-Bonn 'Oberkassel', http://www.landmuseum-bonn.lvr.de/en/forschung/projekte/oberkassel/oberkassel_1.html (undated) accessed 3/2/2016.

⁷¹Unseen64 *B.C. (Lionhead Studios) [XBOX – Cancelled]*, <https://www.unseen64.net/2008/04/16/bc-xbox-cancelled/> (2008) accessed 14/02/2016.

⁷² Momsen, *Gender and Development*.